

SELECTIONS
FROM THE
MODERN BRITISH DRAMATISTS.
WITH INTRODUCTION AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES
BY
G. H. LEWES, ESQ.,
MODERN BRITISH DRAMATISTS.

VOLUME II.

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LEIPZIG:
F. A. BROCKHAUS.

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DOUGLAS JERROLD was held to be the withest man in all England; and, probably no man ever equalled him in readiness of repartee. The Duke of Devon and occasional with him, but the Duke was always lightning playing about the conversation for hours together. Although his wit was everywhere, they do not lose greatly by losing his own wit, showing hearty manner.

DOUGLAS JERROLD.

He was born in London, in January, 1803, and died there in June, 1867. His father was the manager of the small theatre at Sheerness. Instead of taking to the stage, as might have been expected from this early familiarity with it, he went to sea, under Captain Austen, the brother of the incomparable Jane Austen, to whom we owe "Pride and Prejudice", "Emma", and "Mansfield Park". Jerrold's keenly sensitive nature was ill fitted for the rough, and in those days brutal, habits of the navy; and so deep was the disgust and indignation produced in him by the sight of men being flogged, that he resolved to quit the profession at once. Returning home he was apprenticed to a printer, and then commenced his literary life.

His experiences at sea first took shape in the nautical drama of "Black-eyed Susan", produced at the Surrey Theatre. He was then not twenty one. The success was enormous, and has continued. It was not due solely to the sympathy England naturally felt at that period in sailors and their lives; it was due also to the strong passionate interest excited by the story. Mr. J. P. Cook—the actor who first played the hero—has declared that he

DOUGLAS JERROLD.

has performed the part seven hundred times; and many other actors in England and America have repeatedly chosen it as an easy and certain means of securing the sympathies of an audience. "Black-eyed Susan" is a very artless piece, and will not bear reading; but the story is so pathetic, and the situations so interesting, that it must long continue to be popular.

The manager of the Surrey Theatre at once engaged the young author as "dramatist in ordinary"—in which capacity he wrote several works, and received very little

DOUGLAS JERROLD was held to be the wittiest man in all England; and probably no man ever equalled him in readiness of repartee. The flashes of wit were not occasional with him, but incessant: they were like summer lightning playing about the conversation for hours together. Although his *bon mots* are repeated everywhere, they do not do justice to the affluence of his talk; and they lose greatly by losing his own eager, chuckling, hearty manner.

He was born in London, in January, 1803, and died there in June, 1857. His father was the manager of the small theatre at Sheerness. Instead of taking to the stage, as might have been expected from this early familiarity with it, he went to sea, under Captain Austen, the brother of the incomparable Jane Austen, to whom we owe "Pride and Prejudice", "Emma", and "Mansfield Park". Jerrold's keenly sensitive nature was ill fitted for the rough, and in those days brutal, habits of the navy; and so deep was the disgust and indignation produced in him by the sight of men being flogged, that he resolved to quit the profession at once. Returning home he was apprenticed to a printer, and then commenced his literary life.

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The manager of the Surrey Theatre at once engaged the young author as "dramatist in ordinary"—in which capacity he wrote several works, and received very little money. But his reputation rose, and Drury Lane opened its difficult doors to him. He entered and triumphed. His début was "The Rent Day": a domestic drama which skilfully introduced Wilkie's two famous pictures, "The Rent Day", and "Distraint for Rent". After this he wrote many pieces, several of which have been collected in the edition of his works; almost all of them were successful, though only "The Prisoners of War" and "The Housekeeper" have retained possession of the stage.

Besides these dramatic works, Jerrold contributed variously to the literature of the day. He edited two magazines and two weekly newspapers. He wrote stories and novels, and was the chief contributor to "Punch". He was an ardent democrat, fierce against all injustice; and, with great power of sarcasm and pointed illustration, he made himself a powerful people's advocate. His death created a great sensation all over England, for he was personally influential. It is only as a dramatist that we are concerned with him, and the three plays here reprinted, are chosen as specimens of his various styles.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

BUBBLES OF THE DAY:

A COMEDY

IN FIVE ACTS.

The Author of "Bubbles of the Day" is a native of the County of Kent, and has been for many years a resident in London. He has taken for his model the works of the great masters of the art, and has endeavored to imitate their style, and to produce a comedy which should be as entertaining as the best of the kind.

SCENE—LONDON—TEMPLE—1842.

This Comedy was represented for the first time,
February 25, 1842.

has performed the part seven hundred times; and many other actors in England and America have repeatedly shown it as an easy and certain means of securing the sympathies of an audience. "Black-eyed Susan" is a very artistic piece, and will not bear reading; but the story is so pathetic, and the situations so interesting, that it must long continue to be popular.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

The manager of the Surrey Theatre at once engaged the young author as "dramatist in ordinary"—in which capacity he wrote several works, and received very little money. But his

LORD SKINDEEP, *M.P.*

MELON.

SIR PHENIX CLEARCAKE.

CAPTAIN SMOKE.

SPREADWEASEL.

BROWN, sen.

CHATHAM BROWN, *M.P.*

MALMSEY SHARK.

WALLER.

MIFFIN.

KIMBO.

CORKS.

PAMELA SPREADWEASEL.

FLORENTIA.

MRS. QUARTO.

GUINEA.

SCENE—LONDON.—TIME—1842.

*This Comedy was represented for the first time,
February 25, 1842.*

KINRO. Why, take a prudent portion, and so forth, the responsibility. Eh, Guineas?

GUINEA (aside). He's in the railway, I know, but I can only be certain that his shares had gone up.

KINRO. Now, with such a wife, in the end, matrimony of wedlock—

GUINEA. Talking of me, what's your opinion of my husband's bonds?

KINRO. You haven't touch'd 'em?

IN New Street, Covent Garden, there is, or was a tradesman of great practical benevolence. It was the happiness of his temperament to recommend to the palates of babes and sucklings the homeliest, nay, the foulest shapes by the lusciousness of their material. The man made semblance of all things *in sugar*. Fieschi's head, bruised and bleeding from "his own petard," frowned like a demon from the shop-window: still the demon was—in *sugar*. The abomination, though appalling to the eye, would yet melt sweetly in the mouth. The thing was called a murderer; yet, taste it, and 't was pure saccharine.

The Author of "Bubbles of the Day" confesses to the charge that in some places has been preferred against nearly every character in his comedy. He has taken for his theme the absurdities and meannesses of fools and knaves; and he has not—at least, he trusts he has not—exhibited the offenders in—sugar.

LONDON, *February* 28, 1842.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

BUBBLES OF THE DAY.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*A Library in the Mansion of LORD SKINDEEP.*

KIMBO *discovered (reading)*. "Our currency is nothing but a system of fictitious credit, expanding and contracting with our stock of gold." 'Tis certainly easier to get money than to know anything about it. "Expanding and contracting with our stock of gold."

Enter GUINEA.

GUINEA. His lordship not yet up, Mr. Kimbo?

KIMBO. No. The house did not adjourn till three.

GUINEA. Poor gentleman! That parliament must kill him with fatigue.

KIMBO. By no means; for he always takes his first rest before he comes away. Habit's everything: his lordship sleeps sounder in parliament than in his own bed.

GUINEA. But what have you there, Mr. Kimbo; not a novel?

KIMBO. A novel! Guinea. A novel, and consols in their present state! No, my thoughts——

GUINEA. Yes, your thoughts are like the omnibuses; there's hardly one of 'em that doesn't go to the Bank.

KIMBO. And that's why my thoughts and yours so often run together. (*Aside.*) I know she dabbles: if I could be sure of her securities, I'd risk an offer.

GUINEA. La, what's a lone woman to do with money—even if she had it?

KIMBO. Why, take a prudent partner, and so divide the responsibility. Eh, Guinea?

GUINEA (*aside*). He's in the railways, I know: if I could only be certain that his shares had gone up!

KIMBO. Now, with such a wife, in the soft, feathery ties of wedlock—

GUINEA. Talking of ties, what's your opinion of Timbuctoo bonds?

KIMBO. You hav'n't touch'd 'em?

GUINEA. No.

KIMBO (*aside*). Then I'll go on with my love. My angel, don't lay your snowy finger on 'em. Captain Smoke says—

GUINEA. Captain Smoke! Ha, he *is* a clever man!

KIMBO. Clever! He's a pyramid of talent. Well, Captain Smoke says—hush! here's Corks.

Enter CORKS.

GUINEA. Bless me, Mr. Corks! anything happened? Your face is as mottled as—

CORKS. Mottled, ma'am! There's enough to mottle Gog and Magog. (*To Kimbo.*) Have you seen the debate of last night?

KIMBO. No; but I hear that Lord Skindeep, our excellent master, made a speech.

CORKS. A speech! A scream, you mean. He knows no more of politics than a monkey knows of a steam-engine.

GUINEA. And what of it? Although you're his butler, why should you take his ignorance so much to heart?

CORKS. Why? Haven't I a little freehold in my native town, and didn't I vote for him? I feel myself compromised. He never opens his mouth that I don't perspire for the borough.

KIMBO. I suppose they laughed at him last night, as usual;—poor devil!

CORKS. Laughed! If it was only known when he'd speak, he'd empty the playhouses. That a man who would have been so capital in a pantomime should ever have been sent to parliament! And yet to this man I gave my valuable vote! Mind, I say,—gave it.

GUINEA. Then I don't wonder at your being vexed; for when one does give a valuable thing, one naturally expects something for it.

KIMBO. I suppose, poor wretch! they'll skewer him in the weekly papers again?

CORKS. I hope so. (*Aside.*) He shall have it in one; I'll give it him as I've given it him before, or my name's not "Brutus the Elder."

GUINEA. I hope so too; 't is so delightful to read abuse of one's master. Now there's "The Sunday Rattlesnake:" I couldn't get through Sundays without it. 'T is so delicious to see great people picked to pieces, and made nobodies of! It brings 'em down so to one's self you know.

CORKS. When you're not an elector. But to have one's representative continually roasted—it's like being burnt in effigy.

KIMBO. And his lordship's speech is devilish foolish, is it?

CORKS. I blush for the town of Muffborough—the speech is contemptible. Here, Guinea, put this book on the third shelf, there to the right. I smuggled it away on Friday (*Aside*), for my last letter of "Brutus the Elder."

GUINEA. By-the-bye, Mr. Corks, did Mr. Chatham Brown speak last night?

CORKS. He's not reported. 'T was enough for our master to make a fool of himself.

KIMBO. No doubt.

CORKS. They've flayed him alive, though. Oh! ha! ha!—given him such a scourging. (*Takes newspapers from his pocket.*)

KIMBO. Is it very cruel? Pray read it.

CORKS. No—no; here's the papers—there's the speech. (*Gives a newspaper to each.*) Read for yourselves. And yet, here is a little bit of abuse in the leader, that does one's heart good.

GUINEA. Abuse of his lordship! Oh! read—read!

CORKS. A staring likeness of him. Listen. (*Reads.*) "As for the member for Muffborough, he is one of those wise philanthropists who, in a time of famine, would vote for nothing but a supply of toothpicks!"

KIMBO. The very man.

CORKS. (*Reads.*) "He ventures on a state benevolence as a timid spinster ventures on sea-bathing. He stands shivering on the brink of good intentions; dabbles, splashes a little; and, making noise enough to bring all the world about him, never has the heart to plunge right in."

GUINEA. Beautiful bitters!

CORKS. (*Reads.*) "In a word, Lord Skindeep may be called the Punch of Parliament!"

ALL. Ha! ha! ha! The Punch of Parliament!—the Punch of—

Enter LORD SKINDEEP, down the stage. GUINEA and CORKS drop papers, and run off.

SKINDEEP. The Punch of Parliament! Now, although I know every member of the house, who can those menials mean? Kimbo, is my library turned to a debating-room? Ha! the morning papers! (*Aside.*) I stand in the midst of 'em like a conjuror in a circle of snakes. (*Kimbo picks up the papers and presents them.*) Go. I can see by the scoundrel's look of satisfaction, that somebody has abused me. [*Exit KIMBO.*]

Enter CHATHAM BROWN, followed by BROWN, sen., who has a newspaper.

BROWN. Never tell me, sir!—never tell me! Pardon me, my lord, for this abrupt descent upon you; but—

CHATHAM. Sir, if you will only listen—

BROWN. Again I ask you, where were you on Thursday? There's the division, sir—the printed list! Now find me the name you're making worthless, sir—the name of Chatham Brown!

CHATHAM. The truth is, sir, I was—shut out.

BROWN. Shut out! And do you think, sir, when your friends get in, they'll remember those who were always shut out? You were not in the house the whole night, sir!

SKINDEEP. Upon my honour, yes; for I woke him three times myself. My dear Brown, be indulgent.

BROWN. My lord, you know from his christening upwards, I've dreamt of nothing but getting him into parliament. The oxen I've roasted for that young man—the ale that has flowed—the blankets given at Christmas—the handsome organ to the church of Muffborough; and all these for nothing—all to be continually shut out!

CHATHAM. My dear father, why persist in trying to make me a politician?

BROWN. As the world runs, what else remains? Zounds, sir! discover another continent—make out the North-west Passage—find a specific for the plague—the philosopher's stone—and the fountain of youth—write an Iliad, and build a St. Peter's; and when you've done your work, the world shall ask you, who are you?

CHATHAM. My dear sir—

BROWN. Sir, there is but one path to substantial greatness—the path of statesmanship. For, though you set out in a threadbare coat, and a hole in either shoe, if you walk with a cautious eye to the sides, you'll one day find yourself in velvet and gold, with music in your name and money in your pocket.

SKINDEEP. This is Chatham's first session. He'll come on by and by,—Cicero had his beginnings.

BROWN. On Thursday, if he were in the house, why didn't he speak?

CHATHAM. Because I was totally ignorant of the question.

BROWN. And what of that, sir? Ignorant! The great art of life is to pass off our ignorance with such a confident grace, that people shall take the counterfeit for the true thing.

SKINDEEP. I have had personal experience of the beauty of that truth. Now, there's Captain Smoke; he says young politicians are like parrots—they learn to speak best in the dark.

BROWN. No doubt of it. 'S death, sir! if you have no regard for me, have some for the memory of your poor mother; and, right or wrong, talk on every occasion.

CHATHAM. In time, sir, I hope to prove a most filial senator.

BROWN. Well, you promise to speak on this grand question—the tax on umbrellas?

CHATHAM. I promise—I'll try something.

BROWN. And a long speech—a long speech! If I could but once see you reeled out into five columns, I should die happy.

Enter Footman.

FOOTMAN. Sir Phenix Clearcake.

SKINDEEP. Admit him. (*Exit Footman.*) Now, Chatham, if you want a model for your eloquence, Clearcake's the man.

BROWN. Has he so fine a gift?

SKINDEEP. He's stuffed with the sublime and beautiful. You'd think he'd been bit by a poet's mad dog. The truth is, he huddled together a stock of fine phrases as a matter of trade, and some of the stock still remains on hand.

BROWN. Trade, my lord—trade?

SKINDEEP. Yes: by knocking down the estates of

others, he has obtained a tolerable one for himself. Late auctioneer, now knight and alderman.

Enter SIR PHENIX CLEARCAKE.

SIR PHENIX. My dear lord, I cannot restrain a feeling that propels me into a belief that you're in roseate health; for you look a nature's illustration of the best Vandyke.

SKINDEEP. Thank you, Sir Phenix, I am alive. Sir Phenix, Mr. Brown—Mr. Chatham Brown, my new colleague for Muffborough.

SIR PHENIX (*to* CHATHAM). Sir, permit me to congratulate you on your consistency—I mean, on your constituency. I know Muffborough well, sir. Flourishing place, sir! There, every landlord has a happy and contented tenantry, and the word arrear is not to be found in their vocabulary.

CHATHAM. Why, Sir Phenix, we have not the most to complain of.

SIR PHENIX. You of course reside in Elysium House? No! That's odd; for all the world used to point out that house as inevitably the future residence of one of the members for the borough. A magnificent mansion! If I recollect right, it has windows of plate-glass—hot and cold baths—with every essential to happiness.

CHATHAM. Possibly; I know nothing of its hospitalities.

SIR PHENIX. But the scenery, sir! The more than fairy-ground of that more than earthly paradise! The river which good-naturedly encircles the park—the Druid wood, when the setting sun condescendingly makes orient all the leaves—the ruins of the distant castle in a perfect state of repair—the cataracts, with their terrific thunder, softened to the nerves of the most timid lady—while the golden moon, which in that favoured region is nearly always at the full——

CHATHAM. Spare me, Sir Phenix. You really make me feel unworthy to represent——

SIR PHENIX. Not at all, sir. Though such voters of such a borough might have sent Apollo to parliament.

CHATHAM. And I have no doubt would—(*aside*), if Apollo, instead of piping to his sheep, had killed his mutton for 'em.

SIR PHENIX. My lord, I come with a petition to you—a petition not parliamentary, but charitable. We propose, my lord, a fancy fair in Guildhall: its object so benevolent, and more than that, so respectable!

SKINDEEP. Benevolence and respectability! of course, I'm with you. Well,—the precise object?

SIR PHENIX. It is to remove a stain—a very great stain from the city; to give an air of maiden beauty to a most venerable institution; to exercise a renovating taste at a most inconsiderable outlay; to call up as it were the snowy purity of Greece in the coal-smoke atmosphere of London; in a word, my lord—but as yet 'tis a profound secret—it is to paint St. Paul's!

CHATHAM. Paint St. Paul's!

SIR PHENIX. To give it a virgin outside—to make it so truly respectable!

SKINDEEP. A gigantic effort!

SIR PHENIX. The fancy fair will be on a most comprehensive and philanthropic scale. Every alderman takes a stall;—and, to give you an idea of the enthusiasm in the city—but this is also a secret—the lady Mayoress has been up three nights making pin-cushions.

SKINDEEP. But you don't want me to take a stall—to sell pin-cushions?

SIR PHENIX. Certainly not, my lord. And yet your philanthropic speeches in the house, my lord, convince me that to obtain a certain good you would sell anything.

SKINDEEP. Well, well; command me in any way; benevolence is my foible. I tell you what; I've some splendid Chinese paintings on rice-paper. They're not of the least use to me, so you may have them for the charity.

SIR PHENIX. Ha, Lord Skindeep! that's so like yourself! And if you would only enrich them with your autograph —

SKINDEEP. Of course; anything I can do for my fellow-creatures, anything—dear me, I quite forgot; I promised those very pictures to Lady Hum, for her album: so you can't have 'em. But anything I can do for my species——

SIR PHENIX. Your lordship has influence with your gifted relative.

SKINDEEP. What, Mrs. Quarto? Nay, as you are so shortly to marry her niece—by-the-bye, I believe you dine with us to-day?

SIR PHENIX. I have that promised felicity. But Mrs. Quarto, if you would only induce her to preside at a stall, and sell her own stupendous volumes. That's my petition.

SKINDEEP. I don't think the lady understands the commercial principles of a fancy fair.

SIR PHENIX. There is nothing so easy. It is simply this,—to ask six times the worth of an article, and never to give change.

Enter Footman.

FOOTMAN. Captain Smoke.

SKINDEEP. Very well. (*Exit Footman.*) I've promised to make you known to the Captain. He is a devilish clever fellow.

SIR PHENIX. So speculative, so prosperous in all he does; in short, so very respectable.

Enter CAPTAIN SMOKE.

SMOKE. To find you so early stirring, my lord, is past my hopes. After the oration of last night, too! Why, there are certain friends of mine, who having delivered such a speech, would have had the knocker tied up, and straw in the road for a fortnight.

SKINDEEP. These are not times for such men. Allow me, Captain Smoke, to introduce my friends and guests; Mr. Brown—Mr. Chatham Brown, now my fellow-labourer for Muffborough. Swopley, you remember, accepted the Chiltern Hundreds.

SMOKE. Aye, there was a talk of his accepting some hundreds, but I forget the whole of the story. Sir, I congratulate you. In these days of intellectual enterprise, yours is, indeed, a glorious vocation! (*Aside.*) I'll fix him to take the chair at our meeting—get his name as a director. It is with you, sir, as only the six hundred and fifty-eighth part of the delegated wisdom of the empire, to—

CHATHAM. Really, captain—

SMOKE. Captain no longer, sir. I have quitted the service, and turned my thoughts to commerce and the improvement of mankind.

SKINDEEP. The captain was in a foreign force.

SMOKE. The Madagascar Fusileers. Myself and three brothers. Ha! poor Hannibal! Excuse this tear to his memory. All of us in that war, like hospital doctors, bled gratis. But our family was always military—always distinguished. Look through all the last campaigns, and in the thickest of the fight you'll be sure to find a Smoke.

CHATHAM (*aside*). This fellow's as transparent as a lantern.

SMOKE. Now I've cut up my sword into steel pens, and flourish the weapons in the cause of commerce. We are about to start a company to take on lease Mount Vesuvius for the manufactory of lucifer-matches.

SIR PHENIX. A stupendous speculation! I should say,

that when its countless advantages are duly numbered, it will be found a certain wheel of fortune to the enlightened capitalist.

SMOKE. Now, sir, if you would but take the chair at the first meeting—(*Aside to CHATHAM*)—we shall make it all right about the shares;—if you would but speak for two or three hours on the social improvement conferred by the lucifer-match, with the monopoly of sulphur secured to the company—a monopoly which will suffer no man, woman, or child to strike a light without our permission——

BROWN. He'll do it, of course he'll do it.

CHATHAM. Truly, sir, in such a cause, to such an auditory—I fear my eloquence.

SMOKE. Sir, if you would speak well anywhere, there's nothing like first grinding your eloquence on a mixed meeting. Depend on't, if you can only manage a little humbug with a mob, it gives you great confidence for another place.

SKINDEEP. Smoke, never say humbug; it's coarse.

SIR PHENIX. And not respectable.

SMOKE. Pardon me, my lord: it *was* coarse. But the fact is, humbug has received such high patronage, that now it's quite classic.

CHATHAM. But why not embark his lordship in the lucifer question?

SMOKE. I can't: I have his lordship in three companies already. Three. First, there's a company—half a million capital—for extracting civet from assafoetida. The second is a company for a trip all round the world. We propose to hire a three-decker of the Lords of the Admiralty, and fit her up with every accommodation for families. We've already advertised for wet nurses and maids-of-all-work.

SIR PHENIX. A magnificent project! And then the fittings-up will be so respectable. A delightful billiard-table in the ward-room; with, for the humbler classes, skittles on the orlop-deck. Swings and archery for the ladies, trap-ball and cricket for the children, whilst the marine sportsman will find the stock of gulls unlimited. Weippert's quadrille band is engaged, and——

SMOKE. For the convenience of lovers, the ship will carry a parson.

CHATHAM. And the object?

SMOKE. Pleasure and education. At every new country we shall drop anchor for at least a week, that the children may go to school and learn the language. The trip must

answer: 't will occupy only three years, and we've forgotten nothing to make it delightful—nothing, from hot rolls to cork jackets.

BROWN. And now, sir, the third venture?

SMOKE. That, sir, is a company to buy the Serpentine River for a Grand Junction Temperance Cemetery.

BROWN. What! so many watery graves?

SMOKE. Yes, sir, with floating tombstones. Here's the prospectus. Look here; surmounted by a hyacinth—the very emblem of temperance—a hyacinth flowering in the limpid flood. Now, if you don't feel equal to the lucifers—I know his lordship's goodness,—he'll give you up the cemetery. (*Aside to CHATHAM*). A family vault as a bonus to the chairman.

SIR PHENIX. What a beautiful subject for a speech! Water-lilies and aquatic plants gemming the translucent crystal, shells of rainbow brightness, a constant supply of gold and silver fish, with the right of angling secured to shareholders. The extent of the river being necessarily limited, will render lying there so select, so very respectable.

CHATHAM. I would not rob his lordship of so captivating a theme. And luckily, Sir Phenix (*aside*), and luckily for myself, here comes Mrs. Quarto.

SMOKE. An extraordinary woman! Have you read her last book, sir?

SKINDEEP (*aside*). I should like to read her last book with all my soul.

SMOKE. She's a travelling college, and civilises wherever she goes. Send her among the Hottentots, and in a week she'd write 'em into top-boots. She spent only three days with the Esquimaux Indians; wrote a book upon their manners; and, by the very force of her satire, shamed 'em out of whale-oil into soda-water.

Enter the HON. MRS. QUARTO.

MRS. QUARTO. Good morning, Chatham. Ha! Sir Phenix, stands Temple Bar where it did? and have you brought me Whittington's autograph, as you promised? Captain Smoke, does commerce flourish? and—ha! ha!—do you still raise as many companies as when you were in the army? Oh, my lord! your oration of last night was delicious! I haven't laughed so much since the new tragedy.

SKINDEEP. And yet the subject, madam, scarcely verged upon the humorous. Though I blush to say it, there were two or three who tittered.

MRS. QUARTO. Tittered! haven't you seen the papers? The reporters say—roars of laughter.

SKINDEEP. The reporters, madam, have long ears. I heard nothing of the sort. But I am a fool, madam, to have a heart in my bosom. This is not an age of sympathy, but of selfishness; an age of tadpole philosophers, who consider their fellow-man as no more than an eight-day clock.

MRS. QUARTO. An instrument made to work, but not to feel—to be wound up and set going for the convenience of the purchaser. The sentiment, you will remember, is in my work, "Politics of the Patagonians."

SKINDEEP. Upon my life, I didn't recollect it. But if the book has hung on hand, Sir Phenix has a scheme by which you may scatter it.

SIR PHENIX. A fancy fair in Guildhall—so very respectable. Lady Amazon will sell proof impressions of her own portrait. Now, if you would but preside at a stand, where your golden volumes——

MRS. QUARTO. Impossible! I haven't a minute that hasn't twenty different claimants. First, there's my article, "Conic Sections," for the new encyclopædia; then there's my two novels in numbers, "The Ambitious Footman," and "The Filial Climbing Boy;" next, my "Turkey and the Turks;" then a new tragedy, and an "Essay on Backgammon;" then my splendid annual, "The Book of Blushes."

SKINDEEP. (*Aside.*) With portraits of the criminals; ladies in sugar, with cobweb wardrobes.

MRS. QUARTO. And finally, my "History of Mount Strombolo," and my new set of songs, "The Lays of the Lancers!"

BROWN. And employed upon 'em all at once? Why, madam, to write in this fashion, you ought to be a Briareus, with a goose-quill in each of your hundred hands.

SIR PHENIX. And if you were, would, madam, that I could be an Argus, with a hundred eyes to read the hundred things you wrote!

MRS. QUARTO. (*Aside.*) For an alderman, that's really not so bad. Well, Sir Phenix, if I can spare an hour, and you assure me the object is charitable——

SIR PHENIX. The object, madam, is charity, taste, and above all—respectability.

SMOKE. And now, madam, follows my petition. You'll take this trip with us round the world? At all events, you'll not refuse your name. (*Aside to her.*) If it ever

come to anything, you can be taken dangerously ill, and go ashore at Portsmouth; your name alone will fill the ship. And then the benefit to literature! You can write the history of every country—for we shall stop at least six days—on the spot. What a gift to the world of letters! Already I see, in starry type—"Otaheite and the Otaheitans!"

MRS. QUARTO. The world's ungrateful, captain; I shall travel no more. There, don't speak. The world's an old wicked world, and not worth the mending. (*Turns up the stage.*)

SIR PHENIX. (*Aside.*) Lady Amazon and Mrs. Quarto! If we had but a countess! Madam, I take my leave with a load of gratitude.

MRS. QUARTO. Sir Phenix, you'll find Florentia in the drawing-room.

SIR PHENIX. I fly there. (*Aside.*) If I can but catch a countess, St. Paul's is made! [*Exit.*]

SKINDEEP (*about to follow him*). Sir Phenix, Sir Phenix!

SMOKE. (*Aside to SKINDEEP.*) We meet on the civet to-morrow, two. We want from you a short, flowery speech, full of hope.

SKINDEEP. And my shares?

SMOKE. As I said, are snug.

SKINDEEP. Because, if ever the shares go up, 't will be all the better for the charity I intend to give them to. [*Exit.*]

SMOKE. Madam, in the hope that you'll relent, and bring the world once more at your feet, I depart.

BROWN. Captain Smoke, a word. (*Aside.*) Chatham shall be chairman of one of these things, I'm determined. If you will allow me one of your valuable minutes ----

SMOKE. Sir, you shall have any number—(*aside*)—in the hope that I may make 'em valuable.

[*Exit with BROWN.*]

MRS. QUARTO. Well, Chatham: seriously, how do you like parliament?

CHATHAM. (*Yawning.*) Wonderfully well—past my hopes.

MRS. QUARTO. The excitement of your election must have been delightful?

CHATHAM. 'T was a hard contest. As sportsmen say, quite neck and neck.

MRS. QUARTO. As scandal says, quite pocket and pocket. But the canvass must have had its charms?

CHATHAM. Madam!

MRS. QUARTO. The exhibition of character: the sturdy patriotism of some—the timid support of others;—the hearty welcome, and the gruff denial;—the insolence of the party foe—and the worse familiarity of the party friend! Ha! ha! I'm told you shook hands with all the butchers—called their wives angels, and kissed their darling babes for cherubs!

CHATHAM. Yes, madam, I have had my trials.

MRS. QUARTO. And let us hope the reward will come; for instance, the support at Cowslip Lodge!

CHATHAM. Cowslip Lodge!

MRS. QUARTO. Where a certain young lady—a visitor—a sylph, beautiful as day—

CHATHAM. Oh, madam! you know her—can you tell me whither she is fled?

MRS. QUARTO. All I know is, that when the constituents, drawn up before the Dolphin, awaited a grateful speech from the man of their choice, he, their absent member, like knight of old—

“Was seeking over hill and dale,
A lady bright and fair.”

Ha! Ha! Ha!

CHATHAM. You will—you must reveal her hiding-place! At the first glance, I felt she was my fate—my destiny! Oh! madam, I can't talk—can't feel like a man of this dull world, when I think of her.

MRS. QUARTO. Then, as I'm no company for super-human natures, I'll begone. Poor fellow! Begs for a vote, and finds a mistress! Ha! ha! ha!

CHATHAM. Find her! Where, madam? Where?

MRS. QUARTO. Where? Ha! ha! ha! “And echo answers *where?*” Ha! ha! ha!

CHATHAM. Madam—madam! I will not quit you till—

MRS. QUARTO. No? then follow me, if you dare; for I am going to my lawyer.

[Exit MRS. QUARTO, CHATHAM following her.]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE.—MELON'S *Chambers, Inner Temple.*

MELON *discovered writing; MIFFIN in attendance.*

Knocking at door.

MELON. Miffin, I'm still out of town.

[Exit MIFFIN at chamber door.]

VOICE (*without*). Mr. Melon within?

MIFFIN (*without*). Gone to Guernsey.

VOICE (*without*). This is the tenth time I've called for my bill. I shall not call again.

MELON. Benevolent creature! Would all my creditors had his humanity!

Re-enter MIFFIN.

MIFFIN. That's Simpkins, sir; the mealy-mouthed Simpkins. Certainly the best way to make a man speak out is to get into his debt.

MELON. Take this letter to Malmsey Shark, and—what's the matter?

MIFFIN. Malmsey Shark again! Oh, sir! he's a hyena that laughs with men and then picks their bones.

MELON. Malmsey Shark is a money-lender, a wine-merchant, and a vendor of coals. Know you anything worse of the poor man?

MIFFIN. I know this: I wish he'd nothing to drink but his own port; and in the hardest frost, nothing to warm him but his own wall's-end. Don't send the letter, sir.

MELON. What remains for me, when my means are not equal to a gentleman?

MIFFIN. This remains, sir—make the gentleman equal to the means.

MELON. Money I must have! Another year and I shall be free—discharged from the tribe of sharks.

MIFFIN. Yes; as my grandfather was discharged from the army,—to go upon crutches for the rest of your life. Only another year, and so study out the time, sir. Stay at home, study the law, and live on sandwiches. Only a year, sir!

MELON. And then, Miffin, my own master; with my own fortune——

MIFFIN. And your own wife; for without Miss Spread-weasel you get no fortune.

MELON. And thus money is to bribe me to a nauseous marriage; as they give children sweetmeats to make 'em swallow rhubarb.

MIFFIN. Rhubarb! Well, to me the young lady has the face of an angel.

MELON. But her mind, Miffin, her mind! Ugh, a female miser! To me she's like a child's money-box—very pretty outside, but within, a miserable hoard of miserable savings. Marry such a woman! For the rest of my life I should have no richer hopes than water-gruel suppers and one blanket.

MIFFIN. But this Malmsey Shark—this merry man-eater; don't deal with him, sir. Only look, now——

MELON. Only look. (*Showing empty purse.*) Had you the words of Solomon, the hollow voice of this would prevail against you. No other syllable, but go! I am dead till you return: for in this world purses are the arteries of life; as they are full or empty, we are men or carcasses. Go!

MIFFIN. I'll go, sir. (*Aside.*) I see the end: the money-lender will eat him to his skeleton, and then carefully lock it up. [*Exit.*]

MELON (*approaching book-shelves*). Study—study the law. How invitingly yon row of sages smile upon me! With what a dulcet note doth wisdom, clad in sober calf, invoke me to her banquet and her shows! There may he who feeds grow great on dead men's brains; there may he trace a web of hubbub words which craft may turn into a net of steel. There learn, when justice weighs poor bleeding truth, to make her mount by flaw and doubt, and see recorded, aye, ten thousand times, how quibble, with his varnished cheek, hath laughed defrauded justice out of court! Study the law—study—(*Knocking at door.*) Another creditor! My heart falls at the knocker. (*Knocking.*) No, 't is surely Shark. (*Opens door.*)

Enter SMOKE.

SMOKE. I have the honour to address Mr. Melon?

MELON. Sir, I—I——

SMOKE. (*Aside.*) The man who stammers at his name's in debt; a certain symptom. Don't be alarmed, sir; I am the friend of your friend, Malmsey Shark.

MELON. Alarmed! I hope, sir, I—(*Knocking at door.*) Who the devil's that? (*Aside.*)

SMOKE. Knockers, sir—knockers are a damned in-

vention. I can sympathise with any man who suffers from 'em.

MELON. Here, sir, your sympathy is as unexpected as it is unrequired.

SMOKE. They play the devil with the nerves. Sometimes bring on a confinement that lasts for many months. The best thing to fight the disease with is, early—very early exercise out of doors. (*Knocking repeated.*) And then the variety of knocks! (*Knocking repeated very violently.*) That's Malmsey Shark.

MELON. How do you know?

SMOKE. From this fact: no metal ever falls into his hands that he does n't make the most of it.

MELON *opens door.* Enter MALMSEY SHARK.

SHARK. Mr. Melon, ha! ha! What, Captain Smoke too? Well, ha! ha!—my dear heart! ha! ha!—I did n't know you were friends.

SMOKE. The truth is, Shark, I called at your laboratory, and finding that you were come hither, followed you: for which freedom, business will, I hope, be my apology to Mr. Melon.

SHARK. Gentlemen, any way—ha! ha!—I'm happy you have met. (*Aside to MELON.*) Make him your bosom friend, 't will be money in your pocket. (*Aside to SMOKE.*) He's a wonderful young barrister; he's safe at last to sit upon the woolsack.

SMOKE. (*Half aside to SHARK.*) I'm glad he's safe at last to sit somewhere; for if he's long in your hands, he'll not long have a leg to stand upon.

SHARK. Ha! ha! you didn't hear the captain? Never mind; ha! ha! he's such a man for jokes; but then there's no malice in 'em—ha! ha!—none I call his jokes glow-worms; ha! ha! they shine so, and never scorch—ha! ha!

MELON. The true benevolence of wit.

SMOKE. Oh, sir! our friend has so sweet a nature! who could have the heart to blister him? So good in all things! his very wine is medicine.

MELON. (*Aside.*) A patent medicine; for he parts with it only by virtue of a stamp.

SHARK. Talking of wine—ha! ha!—this is a secret: I have six cases of such exquisite Burgundy!

SMOKE. The secret's quite safe—nobody will believe it.

MELON. Six cases! I'll have 'em—not another word

—I'll have 'em. (*Aside to SHARK.*) I understand; the old terms.

SHARK. As for money, ha! ha! that's the last thing I think of.

SMOKE. And will be the last, no doubt. The best fellow in the world, sir, to get money of; for as he sends you half cash, half wine, why, if you can't take up his bill, you've always poison at hand for a remedy.

SHARK. Ha! ha! anybody else would offend me. Some people's jokes are like thistles; but the captain's put one in a glow; ha! ha! good as a flesh-brush—ha! ha! But good morning; I couldn't pass the door, though I'd nothing to say. (*Aside to MELON.*) You'll have the Burgundy? I'm at home at four.

MELON. (*Aside to SHARK.*) At four then?—(*knocking at door.*) Diogenes was a happy fellow; his house had no knocker.

SMOKE. (*Aside to MELON.*) Will you pardon me? I know what it is to be disturbed this way in one's studies by monotonous folks, who only come to call out what they've called a hundred times before. In brief, sir, if you're not in town, I'll say as much—and swear to it—with pleasure.

MELON. Nay, sir, the truth is, I rather expect a near and dear friend of mine, Mr. Spreadweasel.

SHARK. (*Aside.*) Spreadweasel! If he sees me here, there's an end to our dealings. Captain, I have a word to say in the next room.

SMOKE. (*Going, returns, to MELON.*) If it should not be Spreadweasel, remember, I'll find a housekeeper.

[*Exit with SHARK into inner room.*]

MELON. A most unceremonious, yet most timely friend! (*Knocking. Opens door.*)

Enter MRS. QUARTO and CHATHAM BROWN.

Madam! (*Aside.*) My widow plague again.

MRS. QUARTO. I hope I mar no consultation; but 't is the privilege of my sex to tease.

MELON. A privilege Mrs. Quarto can never exercise.

MRS. QUARTO. I have a friend to introduce,—Mr. Chatham Brown.

CHATHAM. (*Recognising him.*) What! Harry Melon!

MELON. Fellow-student! The wildest—the merriest of Oxonians! For which of your virtues—for what capacity, for I see the deed is done, have they turned you into member of parliament?

CHATHAM. I suppose, my capacity for late hours; for truly, I know no other.

MRS. QUARTO. Mr Brown's obligations to your support in the late contest, demand his special thanks.

MELON. My support! Madam, I'm a poor barrister, with no voice.

MRS. QUARTO. Nay, but our friend would acknowledge the solicitude of those, with many tender ties upon you.

MELON. They must be very tender, for I don't feel 'em.

MRS. QUARTO. Oh! the friends at Cowslip Lodge—the fair and beautiful advocates of the purity of election!

CHATHAM. My dear Melon, you are free—your heart is untouched?

MELON. To be sure it is.

MRS. QUARTO. (*Aside.*) Hypocrite! Is it so?

MELON. I stay at home, and study the gravities of life. Here I sit, waiting for briefs, anxious as a spider in his first web. Ha! ha! you're in love: take my advice—as you're in parliament, go upon committees, and forget it.

CHATHAM. The lady visitor at Cowslip Lodge—you know her?

MELON. Not I: did she wear your colours, and with her cherry lips steal plumpers from the enemy?

MRS. QUARTO. She was the very soul of the contest. They say she wrote election madrigals and party epigrams. Then such eloquence! The very attorney of the borough, whose boast it was that he was born a blue, with a look and a laugh, she turned into a yellow.

MELON. Yellow? ha! with his profession 't is a seductive colour. And pray who is this Circe?

CHATHAM. That, since the lady here is obdurate, I must know of you: speak but two words—her name, and her abiding-place.

MRS. QUARTO. Aye; he knows, and will divulge.

MELON. (*Aside to CHATHAM.*) My dear fellow, beware of that widow. For myself, I sometimes tremble to think I'm a bachelor.

CHATHAM. But this girl—this sprite of loveliness and mystery?

MELON. Well, sketch me the beauties of your unknown fair, and if I can complete the picture, tell me if 't is like. Begin,—her eyes?

CHATHAM. Bright as sapphires!

MELON. Granted. As bright and as passionless: an eye without a soul.

CHATHAM. Oh! who can paint their depth—their joy—their sudden gladness—and their instant thought?

MELON. Then 't is not she. Proceed;—her lips?

CHATHAM. The mouth of Hebe!

MELON. A mouth promising nectar?

CHATHAM. Aye!

MELON. Yet talking poor small beer.

CHATHAM. A flood of richest thoughts—of happiest fancies, poured from the heart, and vocal with its truth. Then her laugh!

MELON. What! does she laugh?

CHATHAM. The magic of her laugh would charm a hermit from his cell—a miser from his heaps!

MELON. That's enough; my lady never laughs. Her wildest mirth's a smile, and that seems no part of her, but lies upon her cheek like moonlight on a statue.

MRS. QUARTO. You hear, Chatham, he would turn his Helen to a housemaid, to secure her from another Paris.

MELON. 'T is true I am bound to the lady—bound by wicked parchment. Yet, if you can, marry her—marry, and be frost-bit for life.

MIFFIN *runs in.*

MIFFIN. Sir—sir, Mr. Spreadweasel!

MRS. QUARTO. (*Aside.*) Most happy chance!

MIFFIN. He didn't see me; but I know he's coming here, so ran before to give you word.

MRS. QUARTO. (*Aside to CHATHAM.*) 'T is the lady's father.

CHATHAM. (*Aside to her.*) Her father! What! can her name be Spreadweasel?

MRS. QUARTO. (*Aside to him.*) An ugly name, isn't it? All the better—you may sooner change it. Make no ceremony with us; we'll wait any time anywhere. (*Aside to CHATHAM.*) You must see him. So, until your visitor be gone, we'll wait in this room.

MELON. Not there: I have two clients closeted already. (*Aside to MIFFIN.*) Shark and a gentleman. This way. (*Aside to CHATHAM.*) That woman's invincible. I verily believe she has made a vow to marry me whether I will or not; and, what's worse, I'm afraid she'll keep her oath.

[*Exit, shewing CHATHAM and MRS. QUARTO into inner room.*]

MIFFIN. Malmsey Shark! I would he was hooped in one of his own casks, and nobody but me to let in air upon him. (*Knock at door.*) That's old Spreadweasel.

I don't know how it is, I never talk to him but I feel shabby for an hour afterwards. (*Opens door.*)

Enter SPREADWEASEL.

SPREADWEASEL. Ha! humph! (*Walks about, narrowly surveying appointments of the room.*) These are Mr. Melon's chambers, eh? Law should be very profitable.

MIFFIN. It is, sir, very—to those who sell it. Now, we've plenty of law on hand, and only want customers.

SPREADWEASEL. Gay as a Chinese temple; too fine for business. Clients will only spoil your carpets.

MIFFIN. Oh, sir! clients always pay for what they have; and quite as often for what they haven't!

SPREADWEASEL. And the briefs, the briefs, do they drop in?

MIFFIN. Our bag has been ready this fortnight, yet, 't is very odd, they do not. We have everything, sir, but causes. Such a gown—such a wig! The barber swears it is a lord chief justice in the bud.

SPREADWEASEL. Fine chambers, fine books, fine wig, fine gown; but no briefs. Humph! Fine rods, fine hooks, fine lines, fine flies, but no fish!

MIFFIN. (*Aside.*) I must make a little business here. Still, sir, our prospect of chamber practice is immense.

SPREADWEASEL. Well, well, so you only catch 'em, it matters not whether you hook or tickle. Where is Melon now?

MIFFIN. Consulting with a lady and—a gentleman. A very rich woman, sir. (*Aside.*) The only way to dazzle him is to well gild 'em. They say the widow has half a million of money.

SPREADWEASEL. (*Aside.*) Half a million and a widow! Even now, my dear Pamela needs the tenderness of a mother.

MIFFIN. They're in that room; they can't be long.

SPREADWEASEL. I can wait; besides, I'll look into the other apartments, the (*going.*)

MIFFIN. That room's occupied too. As I said, sir, chamber practice. In that room is Malmsey Shark and—

SPREADWEASEL. Malmsey Shark!

MIFFIN. (*Aside.*) What have I done?

SPREADWEASEL. Malmsey Shark! Pray, sir, does your master drink his wine at a long or a short date?

MIFFIN. At neither, sir; but invariably at sight. (*Aside.*) I must mend this.

SPREADWEASEL. To know Malmsey Shark! A man

whose every step through the day may be traced by a five-shilling stamp.

MIFFIN. Ha, sir! if we were to follow folks' footsteps in that way, who knows where we should be led to? Mr. Shark is Mr. Melon's client.

SPREADWEASEL. Oh! Then he doesn't take Shark's wine?

MIFFIN. Certainly not; and if he did, as Shark takes his law, 't would be hard to say who had the best of the bargain.

SPREADWEASEL. His client? On what business?

MIFFIN. There's now a gentleman with him: a man of immense landed property.

SPREADWEASEL. Go on—I smell it; wants money—go on.

MIFFIN. That's it, sir. Mr. Shark wants an opinion on the title-deeds—the—you know.

SPREADWEASEL. To be sure. (*Aside.*) I know Shark's tight just now—can't do it all himself. Landed property! Nothing like a slice of the fat soil!

Re-enter MELON. SPREADWEASEL runs to him.

How d'ye do, Henry, how d'ye do? Promised I'd come and see your chambers. Glad the rooms are full. What age is the widow? How is the half million left? And the man of lands with Shark? Very rich, eh? Attach yourself to 'em—fix yourself upon the wealthy. In a word, take this for a golden rule through life,—never, never have a friend that's poorer than yourself.

MELON. (*Aside.*) "True to this scoundrel maxim keepeth he."

MIFFIN. (*Aside.*) As I have given away money and lands, like the fairy in the story-books, I'll vanish.

[*Exit.*

SPREADWEASEL. Should like a word with Shark. He's here with—with landed property: know all about it. And the widow,—is it a sure half million?

MELON. (*Aside.*) Landed property! A sure half million! What Mammon's dream is this? You wish to see Mr. Shark? The truth is, he came here merely—

SPREADWEASEL. I know; your client. We're old friends: should like one word. (*Aside.*) Should like a slice of land.

MELON brings SHARK from inner room.

MELON. (*Aside to SHARK.*) He insists on seeing you.

SPREADWEASEL. Malmsey,—how d'ye do, Malmsey?

SHARK. Ha! ha! friend Spreadweasel! I just called on Mr. Melon to——

SPREADWEASEL. Very kind of you—encourage young beginners. There isn't a quicker eye for a flaw in the whole Temple. Lackaday, Harry! I'd forgot. Pamela's below, waiting in a coach. Ha! there's a wife you'll have! She wanted to walk—to walk all the way through the showers; but when we came to Cheapside, I would have a coach! Go to her, and bring her up. I promised she should see the chambers—go.

MELON. I go, sir,—(*aside*)—to keep her where she is.

[*Exit.*

SPREADWEASEL. Well, old friend, how rubs the world?

SHARK. Ha! ha! dull, dull, dull. I do nothing. Ha! ha! I make no money—sell no wine.

SPREADWEASEL. That is, you sell no money, and you make no wine.

SHARK. Ha! ha! now anybody else would offend me, ha! ha!

SPREADWEASEL. Tell me, is this estate extensive—will the mortgage be large? Don't stare—Melon's told me all about it.

SHARK. (*Aside.*) Some flam to account for my being here. The estate is enormous.

SPREADWEASEL. And the spendthrift owner of this principedom—the——

SMOKE comes from room in scene.

Hush! here he comes.

SHARK. Where? (*Aside, seeing SMOKE.*) Ha! ha! Captain Smoke a landowner!—with all my heart!

SPREADWEASEL. (*Aside to SHARK.*) Pray—pray—pray introduce me.

SHARK. Captain Smoke,—ha! ha!—Mr. Spreadweasel; a man, captain, whose pocket's a mine, and whose heart is a well.

SMOKE. Happy, sir, to know so rich and deep a gentleman.

SPREADWEASEL. Rich, sir, not I! But you know our friend—he's called the satirical Shark.

SMOKE. Oh, yes! the verjuice Bacchus.

SHARK. Ha! ha! now anybody else would really offend me. Good day, captain; we'll talk of that matter by-and-bye. (*Aside.*) He mortgage lands! ha! ha! I could, if I would, show him some odd title-deeds. [*Exit.*

SPREADWEASEL. A good man, that; not so wealthy, perhaps, as the world thinks;—who is? Ha, sir! the only safe wealth is that we tread upon. You gentlemen of solid—solid acres——

SMOKE. (*Aside.*) What's this?

SPREADWEASEL. Shark was observing that your estate in—I think he said in—Northamptonshire——

SMOKE. Do you like Northamptonshire?

SPREADWEASEL. My favourite county.

SMOKE. That's curious; it is Northamptonshire. (*Aside.*) He had only to choose; he might have had Peru.

SPREADWEASEL. Shark was observing that—I think the name of your estate is——

SMOKE. Known in the county as the great Smoke property. In a word, I shall be happy to see you there. There are marks in your face—(*aside*)—£.s. d.—marks I admire. You shall see the property: hill, dale, wood, and stream; every nook of it you shall know quite as well as I do.

SPREADWEASEL. (*Aside.*) There's no mistaking the air of a man born to wealth. Sir, this is condescension.

SMOKE. Not at all; you shall be as welcome as myself.

Re-enter MRS. QUARTO *and* CHATHAM BROWN.

Ha! Mrs. Quarto! what brings the muses to the abode of law,—a case of trespass on Parnassus,—trespass or robbery?

SPREADWEASEL. (*Aside.*) He knows the widow, too!

MRS. QUARTO. Robbery! Oh, we of Parnassus defy law, and boldly pillage one another.

SPREADWEASEL. (*Aside to* SMOKE.) Do—do introduce me!

SMOKE. Suffer me to make known Mr. Spreadweasel, a man whose pocket is the Indies, and whose heart is the ocean.

MRS. QUARTO. Well, how do you like him?

CHATHAM. (*Aside to her.*) He her father? Impossible!

MRS. QUARTO. (*Aside.*) Hush! Fortune, sir, is falsely painted blind; for surely, as with Mr. Spreadweasel, she gives the most only where the most's deserved.

SPREADWEASEL. (*Aside.*) What a charming woman! How unlike my first wife!

MIFFIN *shews on* BROWN, sen., and LORD SKINDEEP.

BROWN. I knew he was here! Mrs. Quarto, a thousand pardons for following you! I learnt from Guinea you were come here, and—oh, Chatham!—such a conspiracy!

SMOKE. A conspiracy, my lord!

SPREADWEASEL. (*Aside to SMOKE.*) A lord! Is that really a lord?—and do you know him? Oh! could you introduce me?

SMOKE. With pleasure. Mr. Spreadweasel, my Lord Skindeep—Mr. Brown, father of the eloquent member for Muffborough.

[SKINDEEP and BROWN *coldly bow to* SPREADWEASEL, and turn from him.

SPREADWEASEL. (*Aside.*) I wish he'd say something about my pocket.

BROWN. Yes, a plot: I discovered it only an hour ago.

SKINDEEP. And would force me into the carriage, and in the hubbub, nearly committed murder.

MRS. QUARTO. Murder, my lord!

SKINDEEP. Knocked down an inoffensive passenger. I don't know what may be the consequence.

BROWN. Nothing but his lordship's sensibility. The fact is, one of the horses started at a lawyer's bag.

SMOKE. And a very sensible horse, too.

BROWN. The lawyer started who carried it—slipt—fell—and got up again; while his lordship——

SKINDEEP. Alarmed as I was, I had still presence of mind to bid the coachman gallop on.

SMOKE. I see the upshot—an action for damages.

SKINDEEP. That was my fear. The horses plunged, and the people screamed! I, who have nerves of gossamer—indeed, with my feelings, I don't know what I do in this world at all—I, loving all the world, and therefore, hating litigation, I thrust my fingers in my ears; and thinking the poor man killed, or at least maimed for life, roared, as I say, to the coachman to gallop on.

SMOKE. And so, for a time, you escaped the police.

SKINDEEP. Now, Smoke, don't distress me. The man is not killed; indeed, the man, Brown assures me, is not hurt. If he had been killed, I—I—yes, nothing on earth should ever have induced me to enter that vehicle again. No! no! if he had been killed, I'd have put down my carriage, sold off my horses, and for the rest of my natural life, I would have——

MRS. QUARTO. Gone on foot, my lord?

SKINDEEP. Hired a job.

BROWN. But, my lord, this is a waste of feeling; the man is not hurt.

SKINDEEP. Nevertheless, I have often intended it, and I won't sleep without doing it. I *will* subscribe to some hospital: I should have done it before, only for their number, and the equality of their merits; but to-day has determined me; I *will* make myself a life-governor, and then, whatever accident occurs—for Robert's a headstrong driver—I shall at least protect my feelings, and keep my conscience comfortable.

MRS. QUARTO. But the cause of this speed—the origin of this homicide that might have been?

BROWN. That, indeed, is the business. I tell you, Chatham, they intend to petition against your return. Why, you're not surprised?

CHATHAM. Not at all, sir; I expected it.

BROWN. Expected it! Do you hear that, my lord? Expected such ingratitude! Then what is human nature?

SKINDEEP. Don't ask me. I know the people of Muffborough; philanthropy is thrown away upon 'em. And yet one can't help having a heart in one's bosom—one can't help loving the species. In the last time of scarcity, didn't I—with a foolish sympathy for human suffering—didn't I, at my own expense, illuminate the market clock? Yet how did they abuse me?

MRS. QUARTO. I recollect some lines (*aside*), for I wrote 'em,—that appeared in the county paper. Yes; "*On the market clock, illuminated by our member*"—

"Lord Skindeep, when commercial woe
Our luckless town oppresses,
Illuminates our clock, and so
Doth lighten our distresses."

I believe, my lord, that's correct?

SKINDEEP. I should be sorry, madam, for my nature, to remember a syllable of such ingratitude; but some memories, like wormwood, only flourish upon bitterness.

BROWN. Illuminate a clock! Didn't I give away at least twenty watches to twenty people,—and now, would you believe it, Chatham, the voters misrepresent your motives?

SMOKE. The honourable member has his satisfaction in his own hands; let him misrepresent them.

BROWN. Such uncharitable creatures! They'd make a great deal now about a poor ten guineas laid out upon a cottager's kitten.

SKINDEEP. Yes; as if, when the other party fell in

love with all the canary-birds of the borough, we were not to take a fancy to a few of the kittens. Do they think nobody but themselves has a heart for the dumb creation?

BROWN. But the fellow at the bottom of this—the fellow who's collecting evidence—is one Hampden Griggs, a sturdy mischief-maker.

SPREADWEASEL. What! Hampden Griggs, of Muffborough?

BROWN. That—that is the incendiary.

SPREADWEASEL. And he, to dare to meddle!—why, any day I can ruin him!

BROWN. You can? Sir, I am most happy to make your acquaintance.

SPREADWEASEL. If a beggar can be ruined.—And he to annoy excellent men!—He! why I can destroy him—wipe him out of the world.

SKINDEEP. Now this is delightful! These are the sentiments of public spirit, that repay one for the ingratitude of one's species. I shall be glad, Mr. Deadweasel——

SPREADWEASEL. Spread—Spreadweasel, my lord.

SKINDEEP. To enlist you on the side of my friend and colleague, Mr. Chatham Brown. (*Aside to CHATHAM.*) Bamboozle him.

CHATHAM. I shall be too proud, sir, to place myself in your hands.

SPREADWEASEL. As for Hampden Griggs,—I say it, if he stirs, he's crushed.

SKINDEEP. You must dine with me—you must.

BROWN. Mr. Spreadweasel must dine with us.

SPREADWEASEL. (*Aside.*) I am much obliged to Hampden Griggs, whoever he is. Why, my lord, the fact is, I have my daughter with me, and——

CHATHAM. Your daughter!

SKINDEEP. She shall dine with us, too.

CHATHAM. Your daughter, sir—where, where is she?

SPREADWEASEL. Why I sent her husband who is to be, to bring her here, and—here she is.

MELON *leads on* PAMELA SPREADWEASEL: *she is dressed in the extreme of plainness, and her manner is bashful and rustic.*

SKINDEEP. (*Aside.*) What a lovely piece of still-life!

MRS. QUARTO. (*Aside to CHATHAM.*) Well, is't she?

CHATHAM. No—yes—no! The same face—the same divine feature, and yet——

BROWN. (*Aside to CHATHAM.*) That's right; you do this very well. Continue to be struck with the girl; 't will flatter the father.

PAMELA. (*Aside.*) 'T was well I was half prepared for this. He's deliciously bewildered.

SKINDEEP. Beautiful lady, may your father's friend— (*about to kiss her hand*).

PAMELA. Oh, sir! you mus'n't.

SPREADWEASEL. (*Aside to her.*) Yes he may—he's a lord.

BROWN. (*Aside to him.*) Chatham, don't you vote on the same side?

CHATHAM. (*Taking her hand.*) Madam! (*aside*) her hand beats not, trembles not. Madam—(*about to kiss her hand.*)

PAMELA. Oh, sir! but you mus'n't—

SPREADWEASEL. (*Aside to her.*) Yes he may; he's a member of parliament.

SMOKE. (*Aside.*) I must assert myself here. Angelic lady—(*about to take her hand.*)

PAMELA. No sir; indeed, no more. Isn't there my husband that is to be?

MELON. (*Aside.*) Her husband! Can't she conceal my misery till the time comes?

SPREADWEASEL. (*Aside to her.*) Prudent girl! and yet you might,—he's a great landed proprietor.

SKINDEEP. (*Aside to BROWN.*) We'll have some sport with them. Miss Spreadweasel must go with us to dinner.

PAMELA. Oh, my lord!

SKINDEEP. Come, the carriage waits for us. Your hand—your beauteous hand. (*Kissing her hand.*) Ha! these are the things that make one love one's species.

CHATHAM. (*Aside.*) His Lordship is more than usually philanthropic! Have you not a hand for me, Miss Spreadweasel? (*Aside.*) Still, still her look perplexes, baffles me?

PAMELA. (*Aside.*) His eyes, I feel it, devour my face; no matter, as yet it shall betray nothing. Come, father: mind, I paid the coachman. He wanted two shillings, but I knew his fare was eighteen-pence.

SPREADWEASEL. (*To LORD SKINDEEP.*) You see, my lord, quite a child of nature.

SKINDEEP. Quite—(*aside*)—at sixpences. Mr. Spreadweasel, will you lead Mrs. Quarto?

SPREADWEASEL. Madam, I—I—(*Aside.*) I have now half a million at the tip of my fingers.

MRS. QUARTO. Captain Smoke, we shall not lose you, and —

SKINDEEP. Oh, no! nor Mr. Spreadweasel's son-in-law that will be.

CHATHAM. Certainly not. Harry, you'll join us?

MELON. We'll follow in good time. (*Aside to SMOKE.*) Sir, a word.

[LORD SKINDEEP and CHATHAM lead off PAMELA, SPREADWEASEL following with MRS. QUARTO. MELON and SMOKE exeunt into inner chamber.]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*An Apartment in the House of LORD SKINDEEP.*

Enter FLORENTIA and PAMELA.

FLORENTIA. Never again will I call fortune an ill name. To bring you to this house! Delightful! And the wise member not to know you! Ha! ha!

PAMELA. Nay, I'm sure he's puzzled. I verily believe he at times takes me for a sort of wax-work cousin to my real self.

FLORENTIA. Ha, Pamela! The same madcap as ever. Whether at a school frolic or at an election—whether the sport be breaking bounds or breaking hearts—

PAMELA. Breaking hearts! Men's hearts! Do what you will, the things won't break. I doubt if even they'll chip.

FLORENTIA. And you'll tell me you don't love that grave senator, Chatham Brown? Neither do you love the young barrister, Mr. Melon?

PAMELA. I hate him, my dear; and for the best of reasons—I was brought up to dote upon him. They'd settled about my wedding-ring, I believe, before I'd done with my coral. His father and mine thought the best way to couple their guineas was to couple us. As very children we seemed to understand our wedded destiny, for we never met that we didn't fight and scratch. Oh!

I am sure of it; with all his civility he has a charming, substantial aversion for me.

FLORENTIA. I think so, (*aside*) and I hope so too.

PAMELA. Then I've made the man—poor innocent!—think me a miser; and so he'd shun marriage with me, as he'd shun famine.

FLORENTIA. You have yet another unexpected hope—a rival.

PAMELA. Delicious! Who is the lady?

FLORENTIA. What think you of my aunt?

PAMELA. Mrs. Quarto? Now I remember what pains she took to tell me that she consulted Melon professionally.

FLORENTIA. Yes: she wants his advice in the disposal of all the property left by her late husband. I believe her.

PAMELA. Ha! ha! And where did these halcyons first pair?

FLORENTIA. Where halcyons mostly pair—on the sea-coast. Since then she has persecuted poor Mr. Melon, thinking, too, that I—that I, forsooth, have no eyes.

PAMELA. And Mr. Melon, as I now perceive, being vehemently of a contrary opinion. Marry him, marry him, Florentia.

FLORENTIA. My profound service to you! So I may wed, where you despise.

PAMELA. Nay, had the man come in the ordinary course of human accidents, I might, perhaps, have loved him well enough; but to grow up with your appointed husband, to know the worst and the best that can befall you,—'t is to take from woman's life the sweets of hope. A legacy's very well, but not at the hands of the parson. But now that I'm assured of Melon's aversion—assured of his love for you—nay, I'm certain 't is so—farewell at once my sober, simple seeming! Poor innocent! You shall see this very day how I'll bewilder him.

Enter GUINEA, with packet of letters.

GUINEA. Here, madam; here are all his perjuries—every one.

FLORENTIA. There, Pamela, behold the falsehoods of my future lord. Yes, my aunt has resolved it; and how can I, a poor dependent niece, refuse Sir Phenix Clearcake, knight and alderman? But, Guinea, once more tell the story of your wrongs.

GUINEA. With pleasure, ma'am. My father, who was

a distinguished officer in the service of the sheriff, sent me to Brixton.

PAMELA. What for?

GUINEA. To be finished at Minerva House. That was five years ago; I was then sixteen.

FLORENTIA. Five years! Guinea, the more I look at you, the more I'm convinced that some years are twice as long as others.

GUINEA. I was then sixteen; an innocent thing, knowing nothing of life but the bread-and-butter side. There I met and corresponded with Major Loo. We made a pastry-cook's our two-penny-post, and what these cost in almond-cakes there's nobody knows. (*Giving letters to FLORENTIA.*)

FLORENTIA. Why, these are directed—"Miss Clotilda Montmorency."

GUINEA. I took the name from a book: our teacher—she was my friend—advised me; as she said my father and the major might sometime have met.

PAMELA. And did your lover offer marriage?

GUINEA. He talked of a chaise-and-four; which I thought was coming to it by natural degrees.

PAMELA. But did he never talk of the church?

GUINEA. He never got nearer than the chapel—Balaam chapel, that a friend of his was building; and as I'd had three quarters' music, he said he'd settle me, and make me organist for life—'t was so respectable.

FLORENTIA. And now, Pamela, mark the wickedness of man. Guinea here—good creature!—sternly resolved on marriage, her guileful lover—

GUINEA. Dropt the correspondence, leaving a little bill at the pastry-cook's, which for fear of governess I was obliged to pay.

PAMELA. But what has this to do with Sir Phenix Clearcake?

GUINEA. That, madam, is the blackest spot of the romance. Last Lord Mayor's-day, thinking of nothing, I was seeing the show. I thought I should have fainted; for there, among the skimmers, there was Major Loo!

FLORENTIA. The major and the alderman being one and the same deceiver—being, in truth, my aunt-appointed spouse.

PAMELA. I'd often seen him here, though he's never seen me. When I heard he was to marry my lady, this day I told her all. Luckily, I've kept his letters, and

FLORENTIA. Most luckily; for they shall do me good service, eh, Pamela? Do you spy no sport in them?

PAMELA. A whole comedy: come, and I'll tell you the parts we'll play in it. [*Exeunt PAMELA and FLORENTIA.*

GUINEA. I thought those letters would be worth money some day: I've kept copies, and whenever he's made lord mayor, won't I print 'em! [*Exit.*

Enter LORD SKINDEEP and SPREADWEASEL.

SKINDEEP. Mr. Spreadweasel, my heart has a knack of always bubbling to my mouth, and I say it—at length I've found the man I've hungered for through life. By the way, your's is an odd name—Spreadweasel!

SPREADWEASEL. Shall I tell your lordship a secret? It is n't my name. The truth is, an early disgrace of my family——

SKINDEEP. I see—a piece of mud upon the ermine. Was it treason, or——

SPREADWEASEL. It was poverty, my lord; grim, hungry, hideous poverty. Ugh, poverty! As a boy, I vowed the warfare of a life against it.

SKINDEEP. My own emotions to a spasm—go on.

SPREADWEASEL. There were eight of us when I turned from home to fight the world. Then I swore I would be rich.

SKINDEEP. And heaven has blessed your good intentions?

SPREADWEASEL. I prospered from the first penny; and then fears came upon me, that as I throve, the needy ones I left at home would pluck, and pull, and be a fatal weight upon their rising brother.

SKINDEEP. It happens so—I know it. What I myself have done for younger branches, will, perhaps, never be acknowledged.

SPREADWEASEL. And so I gave it out that I had gone abroad, and shortly after that I was dead; and then—ha! ha!—then became I Spreadweasel—then I changed my name. And this, my lord, was prudence—nothing more.

SKINDEEP. The sagacity of benevolence: for I know my own heart, and I'll be sworn you promised to yourself the sweet delight, when you were rich enough, to go back and scatter wealth about your early home.

SPREADWEASEL. I did—I did.

SKINDEEP. How delicious to one who loves his species, to return among the creatures of his blood, and, like a good genius risen from the grave, to bless their hearts with plenty and with joy!

SPREADWEASEL. Don't—don't!

SKINDEEP. To press a long-lost brother's hand—a

sister's lip; to embrace a nephew here, and here a niece, and rain a shower of gold upon their hearths and heads!

SPREADWEASEL. Delicious!

SKINDEEP. But you hav'n't done it yet?

SPREADWEASEL. No.

SKINDEEP. No. But you will—you will—you will?

SPREADWEASEL. Some day, I think I shall.

SKINDEEP. My dear friend, repress this amiable agitation. Here comes Smoke.

SPREADWEASEL. What I've said is secret.

SKINDEEP. Treasured in the recesses of my soul: for well I know, how few like me can judge the motives of a heart like yours. The world! Ha! if my constitution would only have stood it, I had left the world years ago and turned hermit. (*SPREADWEASEL goes up stage.*)

Enter SMOKE.

SMOKE. My lord, you cannot imagine the pressing need I have of a thousand pounds.

SKINDEEP. Don't wrong my imagination. I can perfectly.

SMOKE. I think old Plutus, there, will lend me the money.

SKINDEEP. And won't you take it?

SMOKE. Decidedly. You see a sudden chance has turned, which will enable me in four-and-twenty hours to make one thousand six.

SKINDEEP. Ha! You are fortune's child, captain.

SMOKE. It's plain, then, the lady's ashamed of her son; for as yet she's never owned me. However, I'm serious. One thousand I'll make six.

SKINDEEP. In four-and-twenty hours? All I can say is, I wish you a day older.

SMOKE. I knew the kindness of your heart; you'll assist me?

SKINDEEP. Anything I can do for my fellow-man; but for you, Smoke, heart and pocket, both are open to you. For your sake alone, I wish both were equally full.

SMOKE. My lord, I wouldn't touch your pocket for the world; I reverence your heart; and all I want is, one half-minute's use of your right hand.

SKINDEEP. (*Grasping his hand.*) You have it, Smoke, —you have it; and my best wishes with it.

SMOKE. I knew you'd not refuse me. Here's the bill. (*Presenting it.*)

SKINDEEP. (*Taking paper, looking at it, and, affecting a burst of emotion, returning it to SMOKE.*) You didn't mean it, but you've struck me to the soul.

SMOKE. What's the matter? This emotion at the sight of a mere bill is—(*aside*)—just three months too soon. It's like weeping at an onion—in the seed.

SKINDEEP. You have opened an old wound. My dear father, on his death-bed,—ha! what a father he was!—my dear father said, "Barnaby, my dear Barnaby, never while you live refuse an honest man your hand; but, my beloved boy, be sure of one thing; when you give your hand, oh! never, never have a pen in it. I know you didn't mean it, but you've called my father up before me. (*Turning to SPREADWEASEL.*) Will you walk into the library? Fond of books?

SPREADWEASEL. Very fond. There's in the very air of a library something that's delicious.

SKINDEEP. There is—there is. (*Aside.*) He means the Russia bindings.

[*Exeunt SKINDEEP and SPREADWEASEL.*]

SMOKE. He's a noble fellow, that Melon; and I'm resolved upon it, shall not be swallowed by that crocodile wine-merchant. One thousand pounds: his lordship refuses. No matter: the money must be had, and so I'll follow Spreadweasel to the library, and talk to him about philosophy. It shan't be my fault if he don't need it. [*Exit.*]

Enter MELON and GUINEA.

MELON. Fly, or we shall have that terrible widow spoiling all.

GUINEA. First, sir, could you tell me what sort of a man the Emperor of Russia is? He has advertised for some money, and—I only ask for a friend—do you think he's safe?

MELON. Unquestionably. You wouldn't doubt an emperor?

GUINEA. Why, when emperors want money, they're very like common folks after all. And now, sir,—yes, I'm going directly—I want your legal opinion. (*Aside.*) As he seldom pays me for Miss Florentia's letters, I've a right to his law for nothing. This it is, sir: if a woman marries—I only ask for a friend—can't she settle every farthing of her money fast upon her own self?

MELON. Certainly.

GUINEA. She can? That gives great strength to the weaker sex.

MELON. And yet, where a woman bestows her heart and hand——

GUINEA. But women ar'n't all hearts and hands; pockets go for something. And she can settle all her money on herself? That takes much risk from the holy state. (*Aside.*) Mr. Kimbo's getting tenderer and tenderer; if his shares continue to go up, I think I shall bless him. [*Exit.*

MELON. How, how to break off this miserable match, yet avoid the penalty? If Chatham would but run away with Pamela, marry her, and so save my fortune? But no: to make my misery complete, the wench is fond of me. I never thought to break a woman's heart; and yet, self-preservation is a powerful law: it must be done.

Enter FLORENTIA.

FLORENTIA. At last, you're in this house. My aunt must now, indeed, be happy.

MELON. Nay, Florentia, why this temper? If I endure your aunt's civility——

FLORENTIA. Civility!

MELON. Is it not my love for you that——

FLORENTIA. Makes you play the hypocrite to an unsophisticated widow? 'Twas for me you walked and talked to her for hours upon the sands, whilst I was bid to pick up shells and star-fish, and sea-weed, my aunt had such a sudden love for all marine productions. Many a time would I have changed condition with a mermaid.

MELON. Once I thought you had.

FLORENTIA. Sir!

MELON. It was that delicious hour, when seated on the cliff, you poured your voice upon the breathless night.

FLORENTIA. Oh!

MELON. And though I was fathoms deep in love before, at every note I went still deeper down, deeper than where old Neptune sat, and all the syrens, envious prima donnas, wept with rage to listen to you.

FLORENTIA. So deep as that? And pray when did you come up again? But, sir, these rhapsodies must end. I shall no longer be a—a *particeps criminis*, I believe you call it, to your duplicity towards my excellent aunt. This day—within an hour—I must receive my husband.

MELON. Be it so. I think I have money enough for the ring and wedding fees; and then, come poverty, come and hallow a back parlour!

FLORENTIA. Poverty, sir! No, sir; no.

MELON. She has a haggard face and evil eye; and

what is worse, a reputation that in this world makes her the very vilest company. Yet, if she bring you, Florentia, poverty herself shall learn the smiling of content; and though all the world shun us for our wicked guest, she shall sit at our hearth, nor hear from us a word to wound her.

FLORENTIA. (*Aside.*) Now, wouldn't any woman love him? Our hearth, sir! Know, when I named a husband, I spoke of Sir Phenix Clearcake.

MELON. Ah, Florentia! I'm not to be frightened from such fruit by such a scarecrow. Have done with teasing; and like a good girl, plot with me to save ten thousand pounds. If Pamela, refusing me, wed first, my father's will gives me my money, with ten thousand more on old Spreadweasel's bond. If I refuse the lady, my fortune goes to swell her dower, and I am penniless. Now, are there no means of finding the girl a good husband?

FLORENTIA. I can't tell; 't is said the creature every day becomes a greater scarcity. My aunt declares 't will soon be an extinct species. Talking of my aunt, that lady, knowing the contract that holds you and Miss Spreadweasel, has, for reasons which she best can tell, already introduced a rival, Mr. Chatham Brown.

MELON. Yes; he has seen or dreamt of some goddess, and, poor fellow! thinks 't is she. Pamela a goddess! I never knew one of her sex so serious a common-place.

FLORENTIA. She's a delightful creature. I find we're early friends—schoolfellows; and when I think of all our school-girl vows of love and amity, I feel 't would be very, very wicked to deprive her of you.

MELON. I'll take the sin upon myself.

FLORENTIA. Her fondness, too, for you is so intense—poor thing 't would kill her.—

MELON. You think so? (*Aside.*) Now, to turn this tide of early friendship. Then honour, manhood, mere humanity forbids it. And then she is so very delightful, you say? Did n't you say she was very delightful?

FLORENTIA. I said—that is, I think I said - delightful.

MELON. And I, dazzled, fascinated by some errant ray—some meteor of the fancy—have overlooked the priceless gem that

FLORENTIA. Excellent; your wit improves, sir. Give you a fitting theme, and—

MELON. Ha, madam! the indissoluble tie of school-girl love! Is n't that a theme? Oh, from what a precipice have you snatched me—snatched yourself!

FLORENTIA. I!—I, sir!

MELON. In what appalling colours have you shewn the falsehood of the act!

FLORENTIA. I said, sir—I merely said —

MELON. Beautifully, indeed, you said,—no blessing could light upon a union bought with a broken heart. Sorrow—as you said—would fill our days, remorse our nights; whilst—as you touchingly observed—our children,—

FLORENTIA. I beg, sir, I—I—I merely passingly observed, that Miss Spreadweasel was a—a—rather a nice sort of person, and that—that you're a false, unfeeling man.

MELON. (*Aside.*) School-girl vows of love! Nay, Florentia, there shall be no treason in our marriage. You and the poet shall still be right—at love's perjuries Jove shall still laugh.

FLORENTIA. And you, I fear, still find him matter for his mirth.

MELON. Never! by this — (*Laughter without.*) What's that?

FLORENTIA. Oh, nothing.

MELON. Surely that wasn't Pamela?

FLORENTIA. Why not? (*Laughter repeated.*)

MELON. It is her voice;—and yet so sweet, so hearty! I never heard her laugh so joyously before.

FLORENTIA. Perhaps not. (*Aside.*) I don't like this. If, now, she should really love him! But I'll watch them both.

Enter PAMELA, BROWN, and CHATHAM BROWN.

BROWN. Charming Miss Spreadweasel! how fortunate that my son's principles —

PAMELA. Principles! What are they?—vow—ha! Harry, dear, how d'ye do?

MELON. (*Aside.*) What transformation's this.

PAMELA. Don't stare, good folks: you know, he's to be my husband; he was left me by his excellent father: wer'n't you, Harry?

BROWN. An admirable legacy.

PAMELA. It might have been worse; and then it's so kind of people before they're buried, to settle how the world shall go on when they have done with it.

Enter LORD SKINDEEP.

SKINDEEP. (*Aside.*) Smoke has fastened upon my vulgar friend, and—ha! ladies, ladies! Ha! Miss Spreadweasel! (*Aside.*) She is effulgently handsome.

BROWN. Oh, my lord, you know not what our cause owes to this lady! You admired my son's principles, did n't ye?

PAMELA. To say the truth, of the two sets they best suited my complexion.

CHATHAM. Your complexion, fair lady?

PAMELA. Yes: your colours were yellow, the other party's blue; and, as it was the fashion to wear a ribbon of some sort, 't was lucky that I found your principles the most becoming. I'm sure there were many who could n't give a better reason for 'em.

MELON. (*Aside to FLORENTIA.*) I'm confounded. Such sudden animation!

FLORENTIA. Very sudden. (*Aside.*) How his eyes glisten as she talks!

CHATHAM. Nay, I am sure you were instigated by a spirit the finest——

PAMELA. And the strongest in the world,—the spirit of contradiction. I'll tell you how it was. There was a strange man, dropt from the moon—a man named Waller—bless me, my lord! do you know him?

SKINDEEP. Waller—Waller! Never heard the name—never.

PAMELA. He used to haunt Cowslip Lodge; such a monster! He stormed at the parrots—abused the macaws—and, more than all, found fault with my whist. This man was a blue.

CHATHAM. Of course. Find fault with your whist! He could be nothing else.

PAMELA. I had never thought of the election; and as I was only a guest, I endured the monster as best I could. But when, adding outrage to outrage, he emptied his snuff-box in the face of the dear unoffending little monkey, on that instant, and for ever, I became a yellow.

SKINDEEP. I shall think with gratitude upon monkeys for the rest of my days.

PAMELA. You ought; for you can't tell how much we owe 'em. Luckily, as the election drew near, the savage was laid up with the gout. Then I travelled over every step of his ground, and out of fifty of his votes—yes, out of fifty blues—he could n't boast of ten that were fast colours.

SKINDEEP. Never—never was cruelty to animals so magnificently avenged.

MELON. And you, Pamela—you canvassed! (*Aside to FLORENTIA.*) 'T is plain; I have been dreaming—fast asleep.

FLORENTIA. No doubt. (*Aside.*) And I begin to tremble that you ever waked.

CHATHAM. How—how shall we ever repay—(*Taking PAMELA'S hand.*)

SKINDEEP. Exactly; how shall we ever repay—(*Taking her other hand.*)

CHATHAM. The gratitude of a life——

SKINDEEP. The devotion of my whole existence——

CHATHAM. I beg your pardon, my lord; but 't was for me the lady canvassed.

SKINDEEP. Unquestionably; but you and I, holding the same principles, must in this case feel precisely alike. Therefore, our thanks—my thanks——

PAMELA. I don't ask them, the enjoyment of the fun was reward enough; for I never talked so much in all my life—never was so drolly catechised. What will Mr. Brown promise? He'll promise everything. What will he oppose? Anything. What will he really do? Nothing.

BROWN. (*Aside to SKINDEEP.*) She has a fine intuitive knowledge of things.

SKINDEEP. Wonderful! I couldn't have answered better myself.

PAMELA. At last I struck upon their sympathies. "Men of Muffborough," said I, "are you to be intimidated?" And the men silently glanced at their wives, and there was no doubt of the fact. "Men of Muffborough," said I, "are you husbands?" "We are," said two or three of the boldest, "and sorry for it." "Men of Muffborough, are you fathers, are you men? In a word, will you sell your voices?" I had touched the chord; there was a shout; and one honest creature answered, "That 's business, my lady; what will you give us for 'em?"

ALL. Ha! ha! ha!

SKINDEEP. Yet how can I laugh?

BROWN. And then you spoke of the—the liberty of the subject?

PAMELA. I did, and with such triumphant effect, that a worthy green-grocer, for only five pounds ten, gave freedom to his jackdaw. Such sport! ha! ha! And then (*to CHATHAM*) your speeches from the Dolphin window!

BROWN. And all made without effort—cost him nothing; positively, nothing.

PAMELA. No! then how generous of the people to give him such showers of eggs and apples for 'em.

CHATHAM. Apples! Nay, I protest, I saw no——

SKINDEEP. No, you were too excited for the good of

your country; but there were apples: I blush for those I represent to say it; apples, the growth of the neighbourhood. I have stood thrice for Muffborough, and should know the fruit anywhere. There were apples, and—eggs.

PAMELA. Yes—you promised to improve the trade of the place, and this spring, they say, chickens will be worth any money.

BROWN. But the magnificence of the chairing! that was a sight. The triumphal car, and the milk-white horses, and the member himself, with his sword by his side, looking as—

PAMELA. As if he were afraid to draw it! And the huzzas of the crowd—and the trumpets—and the member's cocked-hat—and the banners—and the nosegays flung from first and second pairs—and the voters on horseback crushing the voters on foot—and the cheers of the incorruptible, and the smiles of the fair! Whilst fathers show the patriot to their sons, and mothers bless the gentleman so affable and kind, who kissed their little girl, then left ten pounds to buy the dear a doll!

SKINDEEP. Even gratitude has its inconvenience. One can't do these things, but foolish people will talk of 'em. (*Retires up stage with PAMELA and others.*)

MELON. (*Aside.*) Wherefore has she thus cozened me?—wherefore disguised this buoyant, bounding mirth, in strait-laced homeliness?

FLORENTIA. (*Aside.*) Now, I'm sure of it, he dwells upon each new-found excellence. What mischief brought her here to-day! (*Approaching MELON.*) Henry.

MELON. Florentia!—(*Retires up stage with FLORENTIA.*)

SKINDEEP. (*Coming down.*) Two minutes have decided it: Miss Spreadweasel becomes Lady Skindeep. Her family is vulgar; but to a man of enlarged feelings, who loves his species—and they say she has twenty thousand pounds—there's no vulgarity but in the mind.

Enter SMOKE (from library).

SMOKE. My dear lord,—do *you* want a thousand pounds?

SKINDEEP. My dear Smoke, take this for an axiom; every man, whoever he may be, always wants a thousand pounds.

SMOKE. Hear a brief tale. Old Spreadweasel insists upon giving me landed property in—here he comes.

Enter SPREADWEASEL.

SPREADWEASEL. Beautiful book! Some of them charmingly gilt, too.

SKINDEEP. Ha! 'tis the inside—'tis the soul of the book, as of the man, friend Spreadweasel; 'tis that alone I regard.

SPREADWEASEL. Certainly. Still, the covers are handsome.

SKINDEEP. (*Aside.*) He is vulgar,—looks vulgar; but his looks may be mended. When I have made him my father, I shall show my filial love and put him under a tailor.

Enter Servant.

SERVANT. Sir Phenix Clearcake. [*Exit.*

FLORENTIA. (*Aside to PAMELA.*) Here 's the deceiver.

Enter SIR PHENIX CLEARCAKE.

SIR PHENIX. My lord, I would fain venture a hope that I have not delayed the well-known hospitalities of this festive mansion; but, though I have flown on the wings of Icarus, I—

SKINDEEP. If Florentia can forgive you, we must not complain.

SIR PHENIX. Forgiveness is the beauty, the flower of her sex; a flower, first raised, as it were, in Paradise, and now the distinguishing ornament of every lady of distinction.

SKINDEEP. Sir Phenix—my friend Spreadweasel, of Mouse-trap Hall, Bow.

SIR PHENIX. Mouse-trap Hall! Do I see the favoured resident of that truly English home,—known in the neighbourhood as the cottage of cordiality? It has two stories, with parlour bow-windows—is surrounded by railings of perennial green, and for the consolation of the serious, has a backward look upon the churchyard; a churchyard, that only needs another Hervey, for the world to weep over other Meditations. Hard and soft water on the premises.

SPREADWEASEL. A perfect picture of my humble roof. Sir Phenix (*bringing down PAMELA*), suffer me to introduce my daughter. Pamela, my dear, this is—

PAMELA. Major Loo!

SPREADWEASEL. No; Sir Phenix Clearcake.

PAMELA. Major Loo!

SKINDEEP. Nay, Miss Spreadweasel, 'tis Sir Phenix: the accepted suitor of Florentia, your friend, and—

PAMELA. What! Florentia! you another victim!

FLORENTIA. Victim! Oh, tell me! what misery menaces my peace? Your heart—I see it—struggles with some secret grief. A victim—his victim!

SKINDEEP. (*To SIR PHENIX.*) What is this? Are you, or were you ever Major Loo?

SIR PHENIX. My dear lord, if nature has cast me in a military mould—if I have the look of the line,—if—I say if—

PAMELA. Look, Florentia, look: see how conscience blushes in the major's cheek!

SIR PHENIX. Not conscience, madam—not conscience: but the timidity of innocence.

SKINDEEP. Innocence! There must be something in it if you cry innocence so soon. Tell all, sweet lady—tell all.

PAMELA. The major there—

SIR PHENIX. (*Aside.*) If I'm not loud, I'm lost. I—I at once repudiate the major. Though, madam, I may possibly resemble somebody on the Army List, I am not military but civic. Know, madam, I am an alderman—of the skinners' company, madam—an alderman, and hold the scales of justice.

PAMELA. The more your wickedness to give short weight. Clotilda Montmorency!

FLORENTIA. Ha! I divine my wretchedness. I read it in the culprit's cowering eye—his ashy cheek—his purple lip.

SIR PHENIX. (*Aside.*) It can't be true; but I'd give ten pounds to look in a glass.

SKINDEEP. For a guiltless man, Sir Phenix, your innocence is of a timid, gentle sort.

SMOKE. Yes, apparently so gentle, a lady may drive it.

SIR PHENIX. The truth is, dear Florentia, this is a mistake—a—

PAMELA. Florentia! Clotilda! A double friendship makes me doubly bold. Man,—do you know Brixton?

SIR PHENIX. No! That is, yes; by tradition.

PAMELA. And know you not Minerva House?

SKINDEEP. And know you not Minerva House?

FLORENTIA. And know you not Minerva House?

SIR PHENIX. I—I think I do, yes: 'tis in a row of uniform mansions, the middle one greatly preponderating. There are grass-plots in front, with well-stocked gardens behind. Omnibuses pass the door every five minutes.

PAMELA. Attend, Florentia; and you, my lord, whose heart beats only for your species, judge that naughty man.

Clotilda Montmorency—alas, sweet girl!—little thought she when she listened to his tales of glory, that the major's only company was of the skimmers!

SPREADWEASEL. Perhaps, Pamela, this history had better be deferred.

PAMELA. Father, I have a vow to my early friend. My lord, fancy a lovely innocent creature, in the blush and bloom of artless sixteen. I say, fancy her.

SKINDEEP. I *can* fancy her perfectly.

PAMELA. With a soul of romance, caught by the honeyed words of middle-aged deceit! Imagine that, Florentia!

FLORENTIA. I do—I see it.

PAMELA. My lord, Clotilda loved, and was deserted. She still was beautiful; but the canker was in the rose—the lute was shattered—the dove was stricken—and Clotilda died.

SIR PHENIX (*aside*). Then I'm comfortable.

SKINDEEP. And this monster——

PAMELA. There he stands, stained with a broken heart!

FLORENTIA. Oh, Pamela! And this man was to have led me to the church!

PAMELA. And if he had, the ghost of Clotilda—he knows she knew music—would have played the Dead March in the organ-loft.

SIR PHENIX (*aside*). As she's dead, there's no proof. I protest this is altogether a mistake. There's no proof that——

PAMELA. Before she died, she placed the monster's letters in my hand. I vowed to carry them ever about me, and (*producing them*) here they are.

SKINDEEP. His letters!

SIR PHENIX. Not mine—not mine! And even if they were, they're follies of youth—wild oats—mere—ha! ha!—mere wild oats!

SKINDEEP. Is this your reverence for human nature? Wild oats! Nightshade! Hemlock! Wild oats. Every letter here's a dagger to the trusting bosom of devoted woman.

FLORENTIA. Oh, my lord!

SPREADWEASEL. What lovely language!

SKINDEEP. Every flourish a mortal serpent to a woman's heart. The whole alphabet is here no less than six-and-twenty black assassins, marshalled to stab a woman's peace!

SIR PHENIX. The alphabet has, I know, much stabbing to answer for; but I never employed it in those letters.

PAMELA. Read them, my lord.

SMOKE *and* OTHERS. Read—read!

SIR PHENIX. I protest against that, though I know nothing of 'em; but to read the letters of a gentleman—to go over the whole premises of his heart, without permission—I—do as you please—I'll not stay—I'll be no party to——

[*Going.*]

FLORENTIA. Plain—plain! Conscience-stricken, he would fly exposure. My dear, dear friend, what do I owe you for my preservation! And Clotilda—she is dead! I'm very ill. Call my maid.

PAMELA. Clotilda's dead. Nor is there monument or stone to mark the spot where lie her cold remains!

SKINDEEP. No monument! Sir Phenix, this is worse than all. Broken hearts, with the best intentions, will happen; but to raise no stone to your victim's memory—to write no epitaph—I put it to you as a man, have you no love for your species?

SIR PHENIX. As far as a small monument, or a tombstone goes, I'll give that, but——

SKINDEEP. No man can do more; you've said enough. Erect a handsome tombstone, and so silence the world with the beauty of remorse.

SIR PHENIX. But still I know nothing of the lady; and even if I did—suppose it was all true—I say, suppose it was—if a man's to be crushed by a few things of this sort, what's the use of his respectability? I ask again—what's the use of——

Enter GUINEA.

GUINEA (*running to FLORENTIA*). Oh! my lady ill!

[GUINEA *looks significantly at SIR PHENIX, who recognises her.*]

PAMELA. No wonder, that she's ill. What she has heard would call tears from a stone.

SIR PHENIX (*aside*). It has done more than that: I think it has called the dead from the grave. The slut! Though 't is ten years past I'll swear 't is she. Will not sweet Florentia be comforted?

FLORENTIA. Accost me not! Methinks I see the spectre of your victim at your side.

SIR PHENIX (*aside*). Methinks so, too. Perhaps, Miss Spreadweasel——

PAMELA. Go, Sir Phenix, go: and if Balaam Chapel

yet be built, pray there to be made better. Come, Florentia.

[FLORENTIA is led off by PAMELA and GUINEA: the latter continuing to eye SIR PHENIX.]

CHATHAM. Oh, Sir Phenix! [Exit.

MELON (to SIR PHENIX). An alderman, too!

[Exit, following FLORENTIA.]

SMOKE. And of the Skinners' company—fie, fie!

[Exit.

BROWN. Never mind; for all her pouts, she'll like you the better for it. [Exit.

SKINDEEP. How can any man, let him love his species as he may, be such a fool as to put his heart upon paper?

SPREADWEASEL. I know, when I courted, I took lawyer's advice, and signed every letter to my love,—“your's without prejudice.” [Exeunt SKINDEEP and SPREADWEASEL.]

SIR PHENIX. It is she—I'll swear 't is—

GUINEA (runs in).

GUINEA. My mistress has left her salts, and—

SIR PHENIX (brings GUINEA down). Now, stare well in my face—I know you can; and give me your opinion.

GUINEA. My opinion, Sir Phenix?

SIR PHENIX. I am about to erect a little monument to a broken-hearted woman, and I wish to consult you on the epitaph. Don't you think this—it has just popped into my brain—this will tell the tale? Hem!

“Beneath this weeping willow's shade,
Here, reader, lies a lady's maid.”

Will that serve?

GUINEA. Beautifully, with this addition:—

“All killed she was by Major Loo,
The only thing he ever slew!”

Ha! ha! ha!

SIR PHENIX. Slut! baggage!

[GUINEA runs off, laughing, followed by SIR PHENIX.]

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE.—LORD SKINDEEP'S *Library*.*Enter* LORD SKINDEEP and SPREADWEASEL.

SPREADWEASEL (*who is muddled with wine*). My lord, would you not have me rest quietly in my grave?

SKINDEEP. Most certainly.

SPREADWEASEL. Then I appeal to your humanity.

SKINDEEP. Don't. Anybody who does that makes an infant of me. I can refuse 'em nothing.

SPREADWEASEL. Marry her; and save my child from a profligate.

SKINDEEP. But Mr. Melon may amend—may recover himself.

SPREADWEASEL. He can't. So I shall sleep in peace. You'll wed Pamela?

SKINDEEP. To show you what I'll do for my species—I—I'll marry your sweet child. You appeal to my humanity, and ha! friend Spreadweasel, the human heart is a great mystery.

SPREADWEASEL. So they say.

SKINDEEP. It has chords—chords—chords. I never thought to marry; for in very early life, death cut my affections to the quick.

SPREADWEASEL. Well, give 'em time, and they often grow the better for the cutting.

SKINDEEP. That's a beautiful—a philosophical thought. I feel 'em shooting now.

SPREADWEASEL. And so you'll marry Pamela?

SKINDEEP. I can't say much; former years rush back—the grave opens—I—'t is over. (*Seizing his hand.*) Consider me your son.

SPREADWEASEL (*aside*). That I, who have sold shoe-strings, should be father to a lord! But this spendthrift, Melon,—he must be tricked, cheated, gulled.

SKINDEEP. Well, anything I can do for my—that is—gulled? How—what?

SPREADWEASEL. We must make him marry somebody first: thus he forfeits his fortune, I save my ten thousand pounds, and Pamela, your wife, gets all. So when we have put him in fetters, you and Pam may be bound in roses.

SKINDEEP. Having deprived him of one wife, humanity counsels that we should find him another. (*Aside.*) Mrs.

Quarto—I saw her at dinner—looked the whole marriage service at him. Leave the matter to me.

SPREADWEASEL (*aside*). And now to get his interest for the widow. My lord—my—my son! I—I have something in my bosom.

SKINDEEP. In your bosom? Break the ice, then—out with it!

SPREADWEASEL. Mrs. Quarto is, I believe, a relation, or——

SKINDEEP. There is a sort of shadowy cousinship between us.

SPREADWEASEL. Well, then, my lord, I——

Enter BROWN, followed by SMOKE, who lounges in.

BROWN. My lord! my lord! A quarter to nine! The house, my lord!

SKINDEEP. I shall be quite in time to vote. Drumbleby isn't off his legs yet, I know; and though he thinks he's dropping diamonds he always talks tapeworms. I beg your pardon for quitting you, but Mr. Spreadweasel and I——

BROWN. And Chatham, too, on such a night—when he has promised me to speak—to waste his time with foolish girls!

SKINDEEP. Well, tear Chatham from the ladies, and since my country calls me, I obey. (BROWN *hurries off*.) I'm distressed to leave you; but this it is to represent one's fellow-creatures. My dear Spreadweasel, make my house your own. I'll say farewell to the ladies—(*aside*) coax the girl to give me a meeting, and carry off my prize this very night. [*Exit.*]

SPREADWEASEL. Captain, his lordship must be very rich?

SMOKE. Rich! His heart alone is worth a million.

SPREADWEASEL. Yes, but sinking the heart——

SMOKE. Sinking his heart, even then nobody knows his wealth. How now, why do you look at me and sigh? Why so sad?

SPREADWEASEL. Well, I am sad, to think that you *will* cut down your timber.

SMOKE. Oh, ha! in Northamptonshire? Yes; oak, elm, maple, all shall go. In fact, I'll cut every twig I have.

SPREADWEASEL. Oh, consider; the trees that have shaded your grandfather—that you have climbed as a boy—that—that—but if you will sacrifice, don't go to Shark, come to me, I'll be your friend: as you've exposed that prodigal Melon, I'll——

Enter SKINDEEP and CHATHAM.

SKINDEEP. Once more, farewell—we're off—inexorable duty—*amor patriæ* will have it so. (*Aside.*) Pamela consents to give me a meeting; so I'll set my colleague to watch the interests of the country, and then fly back to conquest.

CHATHAM. Farewell, sir,—farewell. (*Aside.*) I'll see my excellent father safe in the gallery, my fellow member in his seat, and then back again to Pamela.

SKINDEEP. Smoke, I charge you, amuse my dear friend here. (*Aside to SMOKE.*) He's muddled already; drench him, and let 'em put him to bed.

BROWN, sen., *appears at the door.*

BROWN. My lord—my lord—Chatham, for shame! You'll not hear a word of this debate!

SKINDEEP. All the better: for as we've made up our opinions on the question, nobody can say we're prejudiced by the arguments of either party. Farewell—farewell.

[*Exeunt all but SPREADWEASEL and SMOKE.*]

SPREADWEASEL. Now, they mayn't be in their quiet beds till four or five o'clock; and all for their country. Ha! such men make us deeply indebted.

SMOKE. Such men do.

Enter CORKS.

CORKS (*to SMOKE*). Mr. Malsley Shark, sir; he apologises for the hour, but business of importance—

SMOKE. Though he visits with the owl, he's welcome as the lark.

SPREADWEASEL. Nothing could be luckier. We'll make him drink—he loves wine.

SMOKE. If he's sure 'tis not his own.

SPREADWEASEL. Learn all his dealings with Melon, and engage him to lock him up as he leaves the house. Then—for his lordship has a wife for him—when the screw is turned tighter than he can bear it, he'll come at our own terms into our own trap; he'll marry—ha! ha!

SMOKE (*aside*). Now, isn't it a moral obligation on a man to cheat such a rascal? I acknowledge the force of the appeal, and will respond to it. An excellent plot! Come, sir—come. [*Exeunt.*]

CORKS. I took the message from John that I might get to the shelves. (*Sits: takes MS. from his pocket.*) I think I've prettily flogged his lordship on his last night's

speech. He'll not forget "Brutus the Elder" while he lives. Every word's a thistle. How I'll double down the paper for him at the place on Sunday! (*Taking bottle of wine out of his pocket, and placing it on table.*) I'll take my glass of burgundy here, for his lordship will not be home till four or five; and I like to write with my books about me. (*Rises; leaves MS. in chair, and approaches book-shelves.*) Let me see; I'm sure I put "Junius" here. Lord Skindeep can't have removed it. I want the book just for a shake or so of pepper.

FLORENTIA and PAMELA run in, FLORENTIA throws herself in chair in which is MS.

FLORENTIA. Oh, Pamela! what an escape! Here, here we can breathe; here we can—(*sees CORKS.*)—Well?

CORKS. Did you call, madam?

FLORENTIA. No. You hear? No.

CORKS (*aside*). They'll soon go; I'll watch 'em out, and come again. [*Exit.*]

PAMELA. Ha! ha! Was ever anything like the alderman's penitence?

FLORENTIA. Don't name him, dear Pamela! What's to be the end of this?

PAMELA. Nay, you know the sentence—matrimony

FLORENTIA. With Sir Phenix? No! I'll change my religion first, and die a nun.

PAMELA. Die a nun! Don't talk in that wicked way, or something will happen to you. I have it. The surest way to prevent the alderman's becoming your husband is—

FLORENTIA. Yes?

PAMELA. To get somebody in his place.

FLORENTIA. Oh! I have thought of that myself.

PAMELA. Consider. Among your acquaintance is there no well-spoken, good-looking young man, of an obliging disposition? I'm sure there must be hundreds.

FLORENTIA. Yes; but you know when one's in a hurry, there's no finding what one seeks. Oh, Pamela! did you observe my aunt? How she sat with her eyes fixed on poor Mr. Melon? I'm sure I quite felt for him.

PAMELA. Your compassion was evident enough. By the way, don't you think Melon himself would pay you the compliment of wedlock?

FLORENTIA. La, Pamela! Do you suppose I'd steal my friend's lover?

PAMELA. I do, and more,—believe you'd exult in the

felony. With women as with warriors, there's no robbery—all's conquest.

FLORENTIA. And finally, you're resolved never to marry Melon?

PAMELA. Never; though he were the last man left us who could walk without a crutch.

FLORENTIA. You're a good creature, and I'll trust you. We've settled it all—he runs away with me.

PAMELA. My service to your women's conscience. And how for his fortune? If he marry first, the man I wed obtains his wealth.

FLORENTIA. For all that, he vows he'll snatch me from the alderman, and—bless his heart!—live in a back parlour.

PAMELA. Melon must not lose his fortune. To prove to you my regard—to show to the unbelieving world the sacrifice one woman will make for another—I'll—I'll marry first!

FLORENTIA (*embracing her*). Was there ever such a friend? Where, now, to find your husband?

PAMELA. Oh, fortune's very good. I've one, and one to spare.

FLORENTIA. Nay, I can guess one—the member, Mr. Chatham Brown.

PAMELA. Muffborough—elysian spot!—has two members: in love and politics alike unanimous. Therefore, if to-night I should rashly start for the church——

FLORENTIA. Depend upon't, I follow in the morning.

Enter MELON (who feigns intoxication, speaking as he enters, and followed by SIR PHENIX).

Go home in your chariot! Not were it an Indian king's, flaming with carbuncles.

FLORENTIA (*aside*). Melon! and so suddenly thus!

SIR PHENIX. My dear Mr. Melon, have you no regard for respectability?

MELON. I despise it: it has spoilt so many noble fellows.

PAMELA. Why, Harry, what has brought you to this?

MELON. Despair! I was left with nothing but the alderman and the bottle; who can blame me for the choice I've made? And now he wants me to go home.

SIR PHENIX. I'll set you down in my carriage.

MELON. Your carriage! There's no room in it! 't is full of fiends.

SIR PHENIX. My carriage! A thing built, as the swan

of Avon would say, by fairy's coachmaker for — (*significantly to FLORENTIA*)—for the queen of fairy. Fiends!

MELON. Pride, arrogance, covetousness, hardness of heart—all the tribe of imps—I've seen 'em leering out at the windows—take a daily airing with you.

Enter SMOKE, followed by SPREADWEASEL.

SMOKE (*aside to MELON*). Keep very drunk; if you quit the house, you're lost.

MELON. Ha! my honoured father!

SPREADWEASEL. Father father to a wine-bottle!

MELON. Then be proud of your son. Ha! sweet little Pam,—my bride, by right of sheepskin!

SPREADWEASEL (*aside to PAMELA*). Isn't this horrible?

PAMELA. Shocking. (*Aside to FLORENTIA*.) What can he mean? He does but feign, I'm sure.

SPREADWEASEL (*aside to PAMELA*). He's so every night. What an escape you'll have! not a sot's wife, but a lord's lady. Now, Harry—my good Harry—go home.

MELON. Home! such a dreadful night!

SIR PHENIX. 'T is a lovely night; the very fellow to that on which the youthful Hero swam the Hellespont. The moon must remind the traveller of Italy; the stars have the most *recherché* twinkle—whilst scented zephyrs—

MELON. Agues—agues are about to-night. Colds, catarrhs that waylay honest diners-out, and make wives widows, babies fatherless, and break the plighted hearts of doating maidens. Now, as it's on my conscience to marry, I'll take care of myself, and sleep here.

SMOKE (*aside to MELON*). Be sure you hold to that.

Enter MALMSEY SHARK.

SHARK (*aside to SPREADWEASEL*). They're ready on the watch. Ha! ha! Only get him to leave the house, since you won't have him taken here.

SPREADWEASEL (*aside to him*). His lordship mightn't like it.

SHARK. And then—ha! ha!—they pounce upon him. (*To MELON*.) Ha! ha! Mr. Melon; what's the news, sir?

MELON. Haven't you heard? Bacchus is dead.

SMOKE. But that can't affect you, Shark; as wine-merchant you've always done without him.

SHARK. Dead, eh? Ha! ha! Poor Bacchus! how did he die?

MELON. Why, he turned money-lender, and made of glorious wine a rascal subterfuge to drive a scoundrel

trade; with usury drugged the heart-delighting cup—and what before was nectar for the gods, became slow poison to the lip of man.

SHARK. Ha! Ha! Bacchus dead! I should n't wonder if the trade go into mourning. But how did he die?

MELON. His own tigers—honest brutes—ashamed of their master's doings, tore him to pieces.

SHARK. Ha! ha! (*Aside to SPREADWEASEL.*) My tigers in the street will tear somebody else. But Mr. Melon—

MELON. Hence! thou canker of the vine!

SHARK. If 't were anybody else now, I should really be offended. Mr. Melon, I go your way.

MELON. And for that reason, I'll not travel the road until 't is purified by the morning air!

SHARK (*aside to SPREADWEASEL*). Turn him into the street. Ha! ha! we'll find him a lodging. (*To MELON.*) Bacchus is dead, eh? Ha! ha! His debtors needn't rejoice—he has left executors. [*Exit.*

PAMELA. Now, Harry, like a good boy let Sir Phenix set you down. Go.

MELON. Go! Oh, Cupid, was such a mouth made for such a word? Go! Then hospitality—maid of the desert—take me to your tent, and let me end my life on milk and dates.

FLORENTIA. Mr. Melon, be advised—pray go.

MELON. You too! You, with your loadstar eyes, cry go! Thus, thus cries the magnet to the needle,—go; and thus it is obeyed. (*Is about to embrace her: SIR PHENIX interposes.*)

SIR PHENIX. Mr. Melon—that lady, sir, is within a very close proximity to the altar—with me, sir, with me. I can pardon the exuberance of wine—but even wine, though of a very favourite vintage—

MELON. Sir, you're a man of spirit: I'll give you satisfaction directly.

SPREADWEASEL. That's right—immediately; now, while your blood's warm. (*Aside.*) Anything to get him into the street.

SIR PHENIX. Satisfaction! (*Aside to SMOKE.*) You hear? he calls me out!

SMOKE. Never mind: you're a magistrate—bind yourself over to keep the peace.

SIR PHENIX. We shall meet, sir,—when you're cool. Then, sir, you shall find—

MELON. What shall I find, sir?

SIR PHENIX. That I'm open to an apology. [*Hurries off.*

SMOKE (*aside to SPREADWEASEL*). Leave him to me—I'll cajole him. (*Aside to MELON*.) Feign to go; then throw yourself upon a couch, and resolutely fall asleep. Come, Melon, you'd better go—you alarm the ladies.

MELON. That's enough. But will the ladies see me down stairs?

FLORENTIA and PAMELA. Yes—yes: certainly.

MELON. Will they curtsey me out of Paradise? Then good night, father-in-law, good night. May your bed be roses, and your bolster bank-notes.

MELON *is taken off by SMOKE, PAMELA, and FLORENTIA.*

SPREADWEASEL. With such a bolster never mind the bed. He's gone; in a few minutes she's caught, and I shall be father to a lord. That I, Jonas Waller, the pauper, should be father to a lord! What's here? Something to assist his lordship's studies. (*Helps himself to wine.*) And this mansion will be to me as my own! These books—these statues. Somehow I feel taller—bigger. What's this? (*Takes MS. left by CORKS.*) One of his lordship's speeches? (*Drinks and reads, gradually falling asleep.*) Excellent wine. "Mr. Editor,—When I consider"—it is very fine wine—"the—the British lion has been"—twenty years in bottle,—“like the air we breathe—have it not—we—we—die—die.” (*Falls asleep.*)

Enter CORKS (cautiously).

CORKS. I've forgotten "Brutus the Elder." What! Old Spreadweasel reading? No—asleep! If his lordship sees it I'm undone. I don't mind serving my country, but I can't lose my place. (*CORKS is advancing towards SPREADWEASEL, as LORD SKINDEEP enters.*)

SKINDEEP. Corks here!

CORKS. Now—(*about to take paper from SPREADWEASEL*)—now for a light finger.

SKINDEEP. Corks!

CORKS. My lord!

SKINDEEP. What do you here?

CORKS. Mr. Spreadweasel, my lord—I—I set wine before him as he ordered, and I thought he might want something.

SKINDEEP. Don't disturb him—he has read himself asleep.

CORKS (*aside*). Asleep, and over such a piece of writing!

SPREADWEASEL *lets paper fall*; CORKS *hastily picks it up*.

SKINDEEP. Give it me: you hear? I'll preserve it till he wakes. (*Puts MS. in his pocket.*) Corks, attend to me: be quick and secret. Within ten minutes let the carriage with four horses—you hear, four horses—be at the corner of the street. Not a word that I am at home: not a syllable.

CORKS (*aside*). My only hope is, that somebody may pick his pocket. [*Exit.*]

SKINDEEP (*approaching SPREADWEASEL*). His senses are soddened—he's fast as his own iron chest. Humph! And this is the sordid lump that fortune fell in love with? What a wicked face he has! Marked and lined as with an usurer's pen. What blank, bare ugliness has sleep in a rogue's countenance! Here there's no heart—no love for human nature—no benevolence! By carrying off the girl I shall prevent inquiry into my means—all babble about jointure, and such impertinence. And she's caught—caught! Hark! true to her appointment—'tis she!

Enter PAMELA.

PAMELA. My lord! My father here!

SKINDEEP. He sleeps the sweet and tranquil sleep of the virtuous and the good.

PAMELA. He's sound, indeed.

SKINDEEP. I was contemplating his noble—his benignant character, marked in his placid face. I am the prouder that he calls me friend—will call me son. His heart is set upon it.

SPREADWEASEL (*asleep*). I'm—I'm father to a lord.

SKINDEEP. You hear: in sleep I bless even the good man's dreams!

SPREADWEASEL (*asleep*). Grandfather to lords!

SKINDEEP. And he blesses me—*us*—with sweetest blessings. Pamela, you hear his words?

PAMELA. It's the nightmare; he's very subject to it. I'll wake him.

SKINDEEP. Not for the world! At this moment he may be circled with his children's children—a rosy, laughing band, plucking his skirts—climbing his knees! Let us haste—let us fly, that the visions of a good man's sleep, in time may be a sweet reality.

PAMELA. And have you torn yourself from parliament—given up the debate, and all for me? What a sacrifice!

SKINDEEP. Don't name it. My love—

PAMELA. Love! After all, I've known your lordship but a few hours: are you sure 'tis love?

SKINDEEP. Sure! at this moment feel I not its pangs? Here, sweet maiden, here! If it be not love, what is it?

PAMELA. Perhaps it's the rheumatism. Did you ever feel it before?

SKINDEEP. Never!

PAMELA. What a slanderous world it is! People say you once loved your cousin, Mrs. Quarto. How know I that something of that love may not survive?

SKINDEEP. Love Mrs. Quarto! Even if there had been a boyish passion, now 't would be absurd. A man may be very fond of grapes, who sha'n't abide the fruit when dried into raisins.

PAMELA (*aside*). A pretty code of constancy!

SKINDEEP. But when it hangs, as now I see it—the untouched bloom upon it—rich and full in promise of delight—then—then—(*about to embrace her*).

PAMELA. Even then, the grapes, to some folks, may be sour—sour.

SKINDEEP. Pamela, would you see me die?

PAMELA. Not by myself: so, if you're in any danger, I'll wake my father.

SKINDEEP (*dropping on his knee*). Wild and beautiful creature, see me at your feet. Here do I offer my fortune, my title—I say, my title—wealth—all!

PAMELA. I don't know what to say.

SKINDEEP (*aside*). The surest way to hit a woman's heart is to take aim kneeling.

PAMELA. To deceive poor Melon! If, now, I could only satisfy my bleeding conscience——

SKINDEEP. I'll satisfy it. You are too young to know what conscience really is.

PAMELA. If I should break his heart?

SKINDEEP. I'll take all the damage on myself.

PAMELA. Or if, dying, his spirit should haunt me!

SKINDEEP. Ghosts never appear to two at a time, and I'll never quit you.

PAMELA. Or if, worse than all, his mind should sink beneath the blow. Oh, my lord! what, as a lover of your species, what would you do?

SKINDEEP. Every thing that humanity could dictate: get him the best advice, and hope for his recovery.

PAMELA. My lover has at least this consolation, he could not be robbed with greater benevolence.

SKINDEEP. True—true.

PAMELA. And to cheat the simple, what is it since the world began, but the privilege of the wise?

SKINDEEP. In this case, 't is justice—justice to the beautiful and good. Let me snatch you from a prodigal—

PAMELA (*aside*). Where can Chatham linger?

SKINDEEP. Let us fly with wings of doves—

PAMELA. No; I'll not stir. Let go my hand, my lord, or I'll scream and wake papa.

SKINDEEP. Why thus perverse, when all things are prepared?

PAMELA. All, my lord?

SKINDEEP. All: at this moment the carriage waits.

PAMELA. And my companion?

SKINDEEP. Who?

PAMELA. Is she not ready?

SKINDEEP. Oh! some female friend or—but what need of a third?

PAMELA. What need? 'T is well, in such a grave design, I have more foresight than your lordship.

SKINDEEP. Foresight? What means my love?

PAMELA. It means, that I must think for both. The truth is, I believe I have a friend.

SKINDEEP. You have?

PAMELA *goes to door, and brings down FLORENTIA*.

PAMELA. And here she is.

SKINDEEP. Florentia!

FLORENTIA. Lud! How you stare at one another! Well, who's to speak?

SKINDEEP. Florentia, I have always said—that is, said it to myself,—what an excellent, good-tempered, prudent girl you were.

FLORENTIA. I am sure, my lord, I've always felt particularly delighted with what you've said—to yourself.

SKINDEEP. That's a girl, I've said, a girl—I—a—Pamela will tell you the rest.

PAMELA. Must I speak? Then, my dear Florentia, his lordship has prevailed. I—I am about to become Lady Skindeep.

FLORENTIA. Elope! run away together! Pamela—you do? You've taken away my breath; but in a minute I shall be able to scream and alarm the house.

SKINDEEP. Is the girl mad?

PAMELA. This your prudence—this your friendship?

FLORENTIA. I will. What! deceive so good, so kind a gentleman as Mr. Melon? And you, my lord, at your

age to marry a young and simple creature,—call you that love for your species?

PAMELA. But, Florentia, my dear friend——

FLORENTIA. Call me not friend, unless you break this wicked match! Think you his lordship loves you?—not he! 'Tis but for your fortune; he'd love a mummy twice as much with twice the gold.

—SKINDEEP. I'm confounded. So young, and so un-charitable!

PAMELA (*aside to SKINDEEP*). Leave us together—I'll convince her. Though her reproof is just—my feelings tell me so.

SKINDEEP (*aside to her*). Don't believe your feelings: there are moments in life—and this is one—when they're not to be believed. I'll see that all's prepared: meanwhile, persuade her. She's an excellent creature, and will see the wrong her hasty passion's done me. (*Aside.*) The parroquet! [*Exit.*]

PAMELA. Ha! ha! ha!

FLORENTIA. Ha! ha! And so that satin-tongued benevolence has made you consent to play the runaway?

PAMELA. I tell you, coach and all's ready.

FLORENTIA. But having gone so far—how to recede?

PAMELA. Look there—my father. His lordship—I marked him—has for his own purpose been most hospitable. Now, I'll lead my lord almost to the very carriage-step—then rouse my papa—curtsey, and go home.

FLORENTIA. But what a pity, since all is ready, that the horses should return to the stable? If Mr. Chatham, now, would run away with you——

PAMELA. You and Melon might keep me company. He promised to return; but it seems parliament has too attractive charms.

Enter CHATHAM BROWN.

FLORENTIA. He's here. (*Runs up to him. Aside.*) Not a word, but listen. His lordship hopes to carry off Pamela this very night.

CHATHAM. Lord Skindeep!

FLORENTIA. Even he; but, resolved to save her, I have taken means to defeat him. At this moment, a carriage awaits the gallant knight who'll snatch my friend from selfishness and age.

CHATHAM. A million—million thanks.

FLORENTIA. But not a word that I have planned this——

CHATHAM. Though such service be to me reproach, I bless it.

FLORENTIA. Then plead and pray; and if in five minutes you win not a wife, despair and die a bachelor. (*Runs off.*)

CHATHAM. Dear, dear Pamela, time that might admit of ceremony, now rejects such vain delay as treachery to love. You have confessed your confidence in my heart—in a passion that, since first our eyes encountered, has been the master feeling of my life, shaping every hope and painting life with hues and beauties it wore not until then. The step I urge is sudden; but 'tis the tyranny of circumstance that makes it so: admit that tyranny, and with a word turn it to blessings.

PAMELA. I—what—you're so impetuous—what would you have me say?

CHATHAM. Say! With that sweet, sunny look and cordial voice, say—there is my hand; take it.

PAMELA. There is my hand, and—I won't say another word.

CHATHAM. And is—is the treasure mine?

PAMELA. You had best secure it, for there are suspicious people about. Lord Skindeep's in the house.

CHATHAM. I have the carriage ready.

PAMELA (*aside*). Another carriage!

CHATHAM. Will seek Florentia, and instantly return.

[*Exit.*]

PAMELA. 'Tis done; and now, I know not how it is, all my good spirits are gone, and I feel as if I could cry heartily. There is my father; I didn't think 't would cost me such a pang to deceive him.

Enter SKINDEEP.

SKINDEEP. Has Florentia consented? Then what is to alarm my precious dove?

PAMELA. The step I am about to take, my lord—

SKINDEEP. Will lead to life-long happiness.

PAMELA. I hope so. Nobody but must approve my choice.

SKINDEEP. Sweet flatterer.

PAMELA. So noble—so generous—so gentle.

SKINDEEP. Cease—cease; or I shall expire with rapture.

SPREADWEASEL (*half-waking and looking dreamily about him*). Somebody's talking.

PAMELA. Yet, when the suitor becomes the husband—

SKINDEEP. Your suitor will ever be the wedded lover. Come.

PAMELA. My father! Let me first kiss his hand, and——

SKINDEEP. By all means—but don't wake him.

PAMELA. (*She kneels to her father.*) Dear father, may you forgive my disobedience, and bless me.

SKINDEEP. (*aside*). As it's the last time, I'll kneel too. (*Kneels.*) Bless her—bless us.

SPREADWEASEL (*aroused by them, lays his hand upon their heads*). Bless ye both!

SKINDEEP. Awake!

BROWN, sen., runs on.

BROWN. My lord! my lord! this is abominable!

SKINDEEP. Oh! oh! A chair—a chair—(*Falls upon a couch.*)

BROWN. To quit the house on such a night!

SKINDEEP. My dear friend, speak low; for perhaps you speak to a dying man.

BROWN. My lord! dying! (*Rings the bell.*)

SPREADWEASEL. Bless me! This is very sudden.

BROWN. Were you ill before you left the house?

SKINDEEP. Or should I have come away? dreadfully ill. I think—in fact, I'm sure,—an affection of the heart. You heard Sir William Dingdong's speech! before he had half finished, my head began to turn violently.

BROWN. But your vote didn't?

SKINDEEP. No—no. Well, when he painted the dreadful famine in Crim Tartary, 't was too much for my feelings.

BROWN. What, when the famine was in Crim Tartary—so far off?

SKINDEEP. My dear Brown, that is the certain proof of an enlarged benevolence: the farther a calamity is off the more I feel it.

BROWN. But you'll return? If you're away, they'll not believe you're ill. That "Brutus the Elder" will be at you again; and his taunts sting like scorpions.

SKINDEEP. Do they? I don't feel 'em. (*Aside to PAMELA.*) Steal to the carriage,—I'll give 'em the slip and join you. Yes, I'll return to the house, though I die in my seat.

BROWN. You'll not die so—but if you should, what a thing for your monument!

Enter CHATHAM, followed by CORKS.

CHATHAM. Now then for,—my father!

BROWN. What! you left the house, too! when I came to seek his lordship, and was hastening back to hear you speak! What, sir, in the name of treason brings you here?

CHATHAM. I—I'd forgot my notes, sir; I had made some very abstruse calculations, and I think I left them here. I'm sure I——

[FLORENTIA and MELON appear at door, and beckon

PAMELA, who cautiously joins then, and exit.

SKINDEEP. Here they are. (*Giving him CORKS' MS. from his pocket. Aside.*) Anything to get rid of him!

CORKS (*aside*). My paper! Oh, fortune!

SKINDEEP. Now, fly—fly to your duty, Chatham; consider what 't is that calls you, and——

CHATHAM. I do, my lord, and haste to answer it.

[*Exit, followed by CORKS.*

BROWN. There—you're better now?

SPREADWEASEL. You look better, my lord. You should fight against this weakness.

SKINDEEP. It is weak—I confess it; but I can't help having a heart. I have said it again and again, I am not fit for this world—this vale of tears and misery. Often to myself do I exclaim with the poet——

“Oh! for a lodge in some vast wilderness!

Some boundless contiguity of shade,

Where——”

(*To SPREADWEASEL.*) Where's your beauteous daughter?

Enter GUINEA.

SPREADWEASEL. Ha! where is my daughter—where is Pamela?

GUINEA. Gone away in a carriage-and-four, sir.

SKINDEEP (*jumping up from couch*). What! In my carriage, and—gone?

GUINEA. Yes, sir: gone with Mr. Chatham Brown.

BROWN. With Chatham!—What for?

GUINEA. Why, sir, if you'll take a woman's guess—I think, to be married.

BROWN. Married! I'll—I'll disinherit my son!

SPREADWEASEL. Married! I'll disown my daughter!

SKINDEEP. Married! I'll renounce my species!

[*Sinks on couch.*

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE.—LORD SKINDEEP'S *Library*.*Enter MALMSEY SHARK and WALLER, shewn in by KIMBO.*

SHARK. Mr. Spreadweasel not yet visible? Ha! ha! such an early man, too.

KIMBO. Yes, sir; but like myself, perhaps he bears trouble better in bed; and he was carried to his room quite in a fit of grief. (*Aside to SHARK.*) His daughter ran off last night with our young member.

SHARK. Ha! ha! So I have heard.

KIMBO. His lordship, too—he's very ill. I never knew him swear so at his species.

SHARK. For Mr. Spreadweasel, I have news that may revive him—say as much. He's very ill, eh?

KIMBO. Altogether, the house is a hospital. (*Aside.*) I shall steal a lounge to the railway market to recover myself. [*Exit.*]

SHARK. And now, Mr. Waller, as I've said, 't was hard upon me to keep the poor thing; very hard, indeed, to pay her funeral; but my wife would have it so.

WALLER. I accompany you hither that you may be rewarded. How long did the miserable creature burthen you?

SHARK. Two years, and ill all the time; and when people are ill, they're dull and moping, and—ha! ha!—to a man of my spirits, not pleasant.

WALLER. At length she died?

SHARK. Yes—she relieved us all. And what did I get for lodging and handsomely burying her?—slander. They vowed she was a cousin of my own, or a—a something that was a flaw in the family.

WALLER. Humph! Now I see the obloquy.

SHARK. Then I was beginning the world, and a good name was worth double to me. Character's like money: when you've a great deal, you may risk some; for though you lose it, folks still believe you've plenty to spare.

WALLER. And no one visited the dying woman—not even his lordship?

SHARK. Lord Skindeep! He!—a lord! He visit!

WALLER. Oh! under a humbler title; for his pride has stooped to such humility. Otherwise, since my return to England, I had not sought him in vain. I owe to an

accident of yesterday my knowledge of his lordship's rank. A crowd, clamouring around a carriage, made me pause. A passenger had been struck down, but was found unhurt.

SHARK. By his lordship's carriage?

WALLER. Aye; and there was his lordship, loud and angry. 'T was then I recognised an old acquaintance. And no one visited your dying tenant?

SHARK. No one. The letters that the poor thing left are, as you see, signed Howard—Lawrence Howard. 'T was her name; at least, so she said.

WALLER. And the child—the boy left by this broken-hearted woman—he, you say, still exists?

SHARK. Ha! ha! flourishes. My wife died when he was still a babe, so somehow he found his way to the workhouse.

WALLER. And his lordship never crossed your threshold—never in your house, saw the boy's mother?

SHARK. His lordship again! Why his lordship—why—eh? What! It can't be!

WALLER. Indeed, it is. Lawrence Howard—I knew his lordship only under that name—is Lord Skindeep. 'T was he who betrayed, and then at her worst need, deserted that noble gentle creature.

SHARK. Lord Skindeep! Then—ha! ha! wonderful! Ha! ha! Captain Smoke's his son!

WALLER. You are sure—

SHARK. Oh, I have watched him through life.

WALLER. 'T was kind.

SHARK. Watched him without his knowing it. I've marked him, now news-boy—now copying-clerk to a small attorney—now agent for the sale of patent mouse-traps—now dealer in foreign stock,—and now, company-monger and—ha! ha!—Madagascar captain!

WALLER. I see his character. The bandit of society—the brigand of a city.

SHARK. Why—ha! ha!—when children are left alone to make their bread of London dirt, we mus'n't judge 'em as if they were born to pine-apples.

WALLER. You see him often?

SHARK. See him? We're close friends.

WALLER. Then he knows the history of his birth?

SHARK. Not a syllable. I have kept it—kept it with his mother's letters, to surprise him some time or other—(aside)—when I might make a good bargain of the commodity. But he has the deepest regard for me. Indeed—ha! ha!—'t would almost seem he had an instinct

that I'd dandled him when a babe, he's so respectful—so deferential—so—as I live—ha! ha!—here he comes.

Enter SMOKE.

SMOKE (*walking up to SHARK*). Scoundrel!

SHARK. Ha! ha! ha!

SMOKE. Man-eater!

SHARK. Ha! ha! ha!

SMOKE. Wine-merchant, by authority, to Beelzebub. Melon!

WALLER (*aside to SHARK*). His instinctive knowledge of your goodness is extraordinary.

SHARK. Now, anybody else—ha! ha!—would offend me. Before strangers, too, your jokes are a little too acid. Indeed, your great mistake through life has been not to have dipped your tongue in oil instead of vinegar.

SMOKE. And your mistake to have dipped your heart in usurer's ink; and so dipped it that not the smallest vein's escaped the poison of the dye.

SHARK. Vinegar again. Ha! ha!

SMOKE. You merry ruffian! You never laugh but I think I hear the barking of Cerberus.

SHARK. You think you hear? Some day you may come to a closer judgment on the matter. Ha! ha! ha! (*Aside to WALLER.*) Hush! As yet not a word. Ha! ha! ha!

[*Exit.*

WALLER. A blithe, light-hearted man, sir!

SMOKE. Oh! jocund as a jackal. Heaven save you from his merriment! (*Going.*)

WALLER. I wished to see Lord Skindeep. Probably you, sir, as one of his lordship's family—

SMOKE. Indeed, sir, I am enriched with no such honour.

WALLER. No! Are you not his son?

SMOKE. His son!

WALLER. 'T is six-and-twenty years since I last communed with his lordship, and—the likeness is most wonderful!—you seem to me in every feature what then he was. And he is not your father?

SMOKE. Father! (*Aside.*) The word makes me sick at heart.

WALLER. You are not his son?

SMOKE. No, sir,—no. Will that reply suffice; or shall I send you my ancestral tree to satisfy you? An idle man—I'll answer for it—might find employment in it.

WALLER. Is its root so old?

SMOKE. None older: for of this, and this only, I am sure,—it struck in Paradise.

WALLER (*aside*). He has spirit—manhood.

SMOKE. As for ancestry, truth to speak, I am one of those who may take the cuckoo for their crest, and for their motto—"Nothing."

WALLER (*aside*). My heart grows towards him. I—we are interrupted—will you give me some few minutes of your time?

SMOKE. Sir, they are your's. (*Aside.*) And the gift is not less liberal, seeing 't is all I have to give.

Enter PAMELA, FLORENTIA, and GUINEA.

GUINEA. How delicious! Married!

PAMELA. Hush! The girl will spoil all.

GUINEA. To think that here you are just blushing from the parson! Well, marriage is certainly becoming; for you never looked more beautiful in all your days.

PAMELA. Will you be silent? If my father—if his lordship——

GUINEA. I'm dumb. But have you taken off your ring, and—you have? Well, I don't know—perhaps, I'm superstitious: but when one has such a deal of trouble to get it on, I should like to keep it there.

FLORENTIA. Where is my aunt?

GUINEA. In her chamber; ill, and will see nobody. When she heard of your going off with Mr. Melon, she took to her bed, and there's been such fainting—such hysterics! I wonder you didn't smell the hartshorn at the door.

PAMELA. Come, Florentia; we have no time to lose. Quick, Guinea; quick. [*Exeunt PAMELA and FLORENTIA.*

GUINEA. Married, this morning, and by licence! How lucky she was of age! A licence—ha! that's the way—the banns are low and dilatory—whilst a proctor's licence oh! it's marriage made easy! Lud! his lordship.

Enter SKINDEEP, followed by BROWN, sen. GUINEA curtsies and runs off.

BROWN. Consider, my lord, should Chatham lose his seat —

SKINDEEP. Well?

BROWN. Well! My lord, you're strangely lukewarm.

SKINDEEP. Lukewarm! Mr. Brown, I'm a man, and not a steam-engine. I needn't boil before I stir.

BROWN. But my feelings as a father—my feelings as——

SKINDEEP. And my feelings as a host.

BROWN. I'm as much astonished as you. But certainly, the girl has spirit; is beautiful, and very rich; so we must excuse Chatham.

SKINDEEP. Rich! Gracious powers! And you'd palliate a robbery by the greatness of the spoil. Your son—my own colleague, too—has insulted me.

BROWN. Insulted you?

SKINDEEP. Desecrated my household gods. Miss Spreadweasel was in my charge—I thought the sanctity of my roof was about her; your son, too, sat at my hearth, and reckless of her father—reckless of the feelings of his host,—stole her!

BROWN. Stole! Nay, 't is plain the girl was willing enough to go.

SKINDEEP. That doubles the enormity. To take a cowardly advantage of a poor girl's ignorance! To whirl her off, ere reflection could warn her! To—had heaven made me a father, my son had acted very differently.

BROWN. However, in this matter, you'll sink all private feeling, and—

SKINDEEP. Sir, there are feelings that won't sink. (*Aside.*) And, the feeling of losing twenty thousand pounds is one.

BROWN. At all events, Spreadweasel must be propitiated. He says he can ruin Hampden Griggs, and—though you are angry with Chatham, he mus'n't lose his seat. Consider your party, my lord.

SKINDEEP. Sir, humanity has no party: and I forget my colleague in the ingratitude of my guest.

BROWN (*aside*). Then I'll attack Spreadweasel myself; for at any price Griggs must be silenced. [*Exit.*]

SKINDEEP. Twenty thousand pounds! Not a wink have I slept this night! And still before me have I seen the laughing mouth—the eyes swimming in triumphant mischief, of that jilt. She was very beautiful, and—twenty thousand pounds.

Enter SPREADWEASEL.

SPREADWEASEL. Ha! ha! my lord! I know what you're thinking of.

SKINDEEP. Twenty thousand—eh? Mr. Spreadweasel! (*Aside.*) The daughter gone, I care not how soon the father follows.

SPREADWEASEL. I've news—delicious news of the run-aways.

SKINDEEP. Humph! under the benign aspect of a lump of wedding-cake?

SPREADWEASEL. Would you think it? Pamela's come back.

SKINDEEP. Oh! I never doubted the young lady's return.

SPREADWEASEL. Indeed, she—poor thing! never ran away.

SKINDEEP. What! I see it—dear creature!—basely, violently carried off!

SPREADWEASEL. Listen. To my surprise, Melon, who had drunk too much to think of the penalty, was for running away with Florentia; she tempted my simple girl to bear her company. Well, on their way to the carriage, Melon was caught by Shark's officers, Shark has just now told me as much, and locked up for a thousand pounds.

SKINDEEP. But Chatham Brown, how did he—

SPREADWEASEL. He was returning to the house, when he was stopt by the squabble in the street. The girls were afraid or ashamed to come back, and he, in the handsomest manner accompanied them to my dwelling—left them within an hour at Mousetrap Hall.

SKINDEEP. And who tells you this?

SPREADWEASEL. Pamela.

SKINDEEP. Pamela! and where is she?

SPREADWEASEL. Here—under this roof. Ha! ha! I knew you'd feel a delight to—

SKINDEEP. A delight! I don't exaggerate, when I say twenty thousand.

SPREADWEASEL. Now Melon's fixed—now to strike a bargain with him: get him married, and Pamela's your own.

SKINDEEP. Ha! I've a thought worth a gold-mine. If he marry before Pamela, his fortune—

SPREADWEASEL. I have said it—falls to Pamela's dower. If Pamela marry first, I forfeit to him ten thousand pounds.

SKINDEEP. But where's your lovely child?

SPREADWEASEL. I'll fetch her instantly—instantly.

[*Exit.*

SKINDEEP. Chatham run away with her! I thought it impossible—I knew I couldn't be so gulled—so blind—so—

Enter PAMELA.

Ha! thou lovely runaway.

PAMELA. Oh, my lord! How was it you missed the carriage?

SKINDEEP. Missed!—

PAMELA. There I sat in trembling suspense, awaiting you; when, to my amazement, Florentia and Melon presented themselves, and——

SKINDEEP. Your father, sweet one, has told me all. Melon was carried off, and——

PAMELA. I begged of Mr. Brown to take me home. Naughty man! How could you disappoint me?

SKINDEEP. All has happened for the best. Now, my loved one, you see the profligate you've escaped; to be flying off with Florentia,—and she to wrong you! She who was your friend!

PAMELA. Ha, my lord! How is it that woman's friendship is so weak to woman?

SKINDEEP. As an observer of my species, I should say, because a greater feeling comes and swallows up the less. Does Florentia know that by marrying Melon before you marry, he is penniless?

PAMELA. No—else I'm sure, she'd never consent.

SKINDEEP. Then she musn't know it. Let them marry.

PAMELA. Poor things! to be beggars.

SKINDEEP. Oh, not beggars. Melon's fortune coming to us, we can be their bankers.

PAMELA. I'd forgotten that.

SKINDEEP. Then how beautiful the feeling! What an every-day expansion of benevolence—what a growing of the human heart!—to provide for their wants——

PAMELA. Out of their own money. What a delightful picture of humanity on our side, and gratitude on theirs!

Enter SPREADWEASEL.

SPREADWEASEL. Well, what have you decided?

PAMELA. Nothing: as yet we have only imagined a beautiful vision.

SKINDEEP. A vision already realised—Listen. Pamela, you are married!

PAMELA. My lord!

SKINDEEP. Nay, 't is certain; fast—fast married.

SPREADWEASEL. What! Married!

PAMELA (*aside*). He's found it out? Has Guinea told him?

SKINDEEP. Irrevocably bound in the holy ties of—ha! ha! ha!—why are you both turned to stone? How you stare! I mean, Pamela, you must consider yourself married—that is, you must write as such to Melon.

SPREADWEASEL. Oh! is that all?

PAMELA. Lud! my lord! I—I—you spoke so seriously that—ha! ha! ha!—for a moment I hardly knew whether I was married or not!

SPREADWEASEL. Go on, my lord—I guess the plot.

SKINDEEP. Write to him that you are married. He'll believe you, but not your father or

SPREADWEASEL. Or his lordship.

SKINDEEP. Knowing that you've a husband, he'll think his fortune safe, and instantly marry Florentia.

SPREADWEASEL. Ha! ha! ha! In the meantime, I'll instruct Shark to let Melon out on easy terms, and——

SKINDEEP. Ha! but for Shark's interference, Melon had carried off the girl, and all had been well. Now he's sad and sober, he may hesitate.

PAMELA. Impossible, with the letter I'll send him; and here comes Florentia, who shall bear the missive. But, father, you must not be here.

SPREADWEASEL. I'm gone: but mind, my dear girl, a strong letter—ha! ha!—an affectionate farewell for ever; ha! ha! and then—(*aside*)—then am I father to a lord.—(*Retires, and subsequently goes off.*)

Enter FLORENTIA.

PAMELA (*aside to SKINDEEP*). She's here. (*Aside to FLORENTIA.*) All goes well. My dear friend, I have pleaded your suit with his lordship: and—and—I can say no more: he has a heart.

SKINDEEP (*aside*). What does she mean? Yes,—I have a heart.

FLORENTIA. I was sure that his lordship's benevolence—his charity towards human weakness——

PAMELA. All this his lordship has beautifully shown; and the end is, he blesses you, and bids you be happy.

FLORENTIA. Oh, my lord!

SKINDEEP. Bless you, and be happy!

FLORENTIA. The world may censure me for breaking with Sir Phenix, but——

SKINDEEP. The world! What we call the world, is but a place of dreams, inhabited by shadows. This—(*striking his heart*)—this is the world. Does this approve your conduct?

FLORENTIA. It does—it does!

SKINDEEP. Then you're right. That's the only world I've ever considered, and it never yet reproved me.

FLORENTIA. And—I'd fain hope—Sir Phenix won't be very wretched.

SKINDEEP. Make yourself comfortable about him; he

hasn't the sensibility to be miserable. I sometimes envy such people—they're greatly privileged.

FLORENTIA. Then—you—you think I'd better marry?

SKINDEEP. I'm sure of it.

FLORENTIA. And you, Pamela, can forgive my passion for one who was to have blessed you?

PAMELA. Oh, I can well afford such forgiveness, for I myself am blessed beyond all hope of blessing.

SKINDEEP (*aside*). Fascinating creature! (*Aside to her.*) Make the poor thing happy outright—tell her all.

PAMELA. And now, Florentia, will you bear a letter to your future helpmate?

FLORENTIA. A letter—from you?

PAMELA. Oh, I'll not upbraid him; for why should I reprove him for taking another wife, when I—when I have chosen another husband?

FLORENTIA. A husband!

SKINDEEP. She speaks a lovely truth—another husband.

FLORENTIA. And you are married?

SKINDEEP. Blush not; but with that rose-bud mouth, say—yes.

PAMELA. Yes.

FLORENTIA. Such duplicity is impossible.

SKINDEEP. Florentia, I know the human heart; and in such matters no duplicity is impossible. Your friend is married! You behold a doating wife.

PAMELA. Oh, my lord! Yet why should I blush to confess it? His lordship has said it. Melon never loved me; and now he is free. Go—go and be happy.

SKINDEEP. Fortunately, Mrs. Quarto is very ill; that is—she is ill—so go and be happy. Stay, the letter. Now, sweet Pamela, write, write. Give him assurance of his liberty.

Enter SPREADWEASEL. He watches from the side.

PAMELA sits at table to write.

FLORENTIA. By all means: under your own hand.

SPREADWEASEL (*aside*). She's making out his death-warrant.

PAMELA. Now, to begin. (*Writes.*) "My own loved, dearest Henry."

FLORENTIA and SKINDEEP. What!

PAMELA. Lud! See the effect of habit. I mean, "Sir."

SKINDEEP. No: too hot and too cold. Address him with a tepid politeness. "My dear Mr. Melon."

PAMELA. "My dear Mr. Melon." Oh! my fingers shake, and—pray, my lord, give me words, for I hav'n't a syllable of my own.

SKINDEEP. Write thus:—"Feeling that the human heart has chords——"

PAMELA. Chords with an *h*?

SKINDEEP. Certainly: "and feeling that mine cannot respond to yours, I, as a lover of my species——"

FLORENTIA. Does your lordship mean species or specie?

SKINDEEP. "Species;" with the final *s* of course.

PAMELA (*writing*). "As a lover of my species"—with the *s*.

SKINDEEP. "Herewith release you from your vows. That the release may prove effectual, I have married a husband whom I love dearly—dearly."

PAMELA (*writing*). "Dearly, dearly." Let me write "dearly" three times.

SKINDEEP. Three thousand. Now fold it. Stop; humanity suggests a postscript. "If out of gaol by the time, I shall be happy to see you at our first party." (*Aside to PAMELA.*) It's so cool and straightforward, he must believe it.

PAMELA (*unseen by SKINDEEP, enclosing a paper in letter.*) Oh! there's that within it—(*aside*)—my marriage certificate—he can't doubt. There, Florentia; take it, and with it a husband.

SKINDEEP. And with it, once more, our blessing.

FLORENTIA. Poor Sir Phenix! if this step should make him miserable for life!

SKINDEEP. Well, if it do make him moderately wretched, he'll deserve it. Since your story of the hapless Clotilda, my faith is shaken in the alderman. I believe Sir Phenix to be rather a profligate person; and were it not for his respectability, I——

Enter Servant, showing in SIR PHENIX CLEARCAKE.

SERVANT. Sir Phenix Clearcake.

SIR PHENIX. Ladies, your devoted; my lord, your servant.

SKINDEEP. Sir Phenix, you come, as you ever come, most opportunely.

SIR PHENIX. I ventured to call, in the fervent hope that I might woo Florentia to the park. The air to-day is so delicious, 't would put Montpelier to the blush; the sky asserts a peculiar claim to the term cerulean, and——

SKINDEEP. Florentia has a letter of the utmost consequence to deliver to a friend of Miss Spreadweasel's.

SIR PHENIX. Miss Spreadweasel's friend? he is happy in that title—happy, though in Siberia.

SKINDEEP. He's not so far, but perhaps not more comfortable. Do you know Newman-street?

SIR PHENIX. From here 't is on the left of that great commercial artery, Oxford-street. In that favoured *locale* is a mansion wholly dedicated to the hospitalities of the sheriff of Middlesex.

SKINDEEP. Exactly.

SIR PHENIX. It has three stories, with picturesque iron gratings at upper windows. In the interior, extreme luxury may be said to yield the palm to extreme security. As for household economy—sheet of paper, sixpence—pen-and-ink, a shilling.

SKINDEEP. Before you drive in the Park, will you accompany Florentia to—to Newman-street?

FLORENTIA (*aside to him*). Oh, my lord! what would you do?

SIR PHENIX. Will I? With inexhaustible pleasure.

SKINDEEP (*aside to FLORENTIA*). 'T is the most humane way to get rid of him. The explanation must come; and Melon himself will then be on the spot, and is the best person to give it him. Then, farewell; a pleasant drive.

SIR PHENIX. A farewell—a short farewell.

PAMELA. Florentia, be sure you deliver my letter.

FLORENTIA. Oh, fear me not!—into the gentleman's own hand, be sure of it. Come, Sir Phenix, I fear me I'm a sad plague to you.

SIR PHENIX. A delight—a rapture.

FLORENTIA. But this is the last—the very last time I'll tease you. Farewell.

[*Exeunt* SIR PHENIX and FLORENTIA.]

SKINDEEP. Ha! ha! ha!

SPREADWEASEL (*coming forward*). Ha! ha! ha! Caught—tricked! You are your father's own daughter; for you've cheated him beautifully.

SKINDEEP. I'm thinking, when they're married, where they'll go to spend the honeymoon.

SPREADWEASEL. Perhaps to Captain Smoke's estate, in Northamptonshire.

SKINDEEP. Captain Smoke's estate would be the fittest place for such a couple.

Enter BROWN, sen., with CHATHAM BROWN.

BROWN. Now, sir—now, answer for yourself. Did you not return to this house last night?

CHATHAM. As certainly as I again quitted it this morning.

BROWN. And there, too, is Miss Spreadweasel, and — elopement, my lord!—what tale is all this?

SKINDEEP. A jest, a harmless jest of mine—no more.

BROWN. Is this a time to jest, when you know the petition is—now, Mr. Spreadweasel, this Hampden Griggs—he must be silenced—you say you can ruin him?

SPREADWEASEL. Leave him to me: I say no more—leave him to me. (*Aside to SKINDEEP.*) My lord—ha! ha!—would you think it? I owe all my present happiness to this Hampden Griggs; and yet—ha! ha!—'t was all a white lie of mine; I know him no more than Nebuchadnezzar—ha! ha!

Enter MELON and FLORENTIA, followed by SIR PHENIX.
Eh! Melon!

SIR PHENIX. We were about to enter the vehicle, when the gentleman alighted at this hospitable door.

FLORENTIA. Nevertheless, Pamela, I have given him the letter.

MELON. For the which I thank you, and congratulate you heartily.

SPREADWEASEL. But who—who released you? Not Shark?

MELON. Oh, no! a newer and nobler acquaintance; although it seems my need was not so great. For this paper not only gives me possession of my fortune; but—you recollect the bond, sir—ten thousand pounds.

[*Gives SPREADWEASEL the paper.*]

SPREADWEASEL. Paper! What! A—a marriage certificate!

SKINDEEP (*takes paper and reads it*). "Solemnised between Chatham Brown, bachelor, and Pamela Spreadweasel, spinster!"

BROWN. Married! Then, my lord, you didn't jest after all.

SKINDEEP. Jest, sir! Truth's a joke—honour's a juggle—and sincerity a sound.

SPREADWEASEL. Married! But it can't be!—it musn't be? Wench—Pamela—speak!

PAMELA. La, father! you knew you told me to say I was married, and could you think I'd wish to tell an untruth? Florentia dear, I give you joy.

SIR PHENIX. Allow me to respond to that hymeneal aspiration with——

MELON. Nay, Sir Phenix, I must relieve you of that task.

FLORENTIA. Quite true, Sir Phenix. I discovered that 't was impossible I could marry you.

SIR PHENIX. Impossible!

FLORENTIA. Yes; for I found that—that Clotilda was still alive.

SIR PHENIX. My lord, you hear this—will not your humanity advise me? Rejected! What shall I do?—how exist—with my heart shivered to atoms?

SKINDEEP. Do! Pshaw! live upon the pieces.

MELON. But where's my friend—where's Captain Smoke?

SPREADWEASEL. Your friend! was it the captain who released you?

SKINDEEP (*aside*). Smoke! (*To SPREADWEASEL aside*.) Have you lent Smoke money?

SPREADWEASEL. A thousand pounds, I couldn't refuse—'t was such good security.

SKINDEEP. Not his own, then?

SPREADWEASEL. Yes: has he not the great Smoke property? I thought your lordship's countenance was a guarantee.

SKINDEEP. You'll never get a penny.

SPREADWEASEL. What!

SKINDEEP. You've lost your daughter—you've lost your money, and—

BROWN. Now, Mr. Spreadweasel, as Chatham's your son-in-law—this Hampden Griggs—

SPREADWEASEL. Curse Hampden Griggs! 't is he has done it all.

CHATHAM. Nay, father, spare your pains; I've done with parliament, and shall yield my seat to some one worthier of its duties.

PAMELA. Quite true. He's married now, and must keep early hours.

Enter SMOKE, followed by SHARK.

SKINDEEP (*going up to SMOKE*). You—you have been in this conspiracy against me. Now, sir, look in my face and answer, are you not a worthless fellow?

SMOKE. It is most true, sir.

SKINDEEP. A scheming, plotting fellow!

SMOKE. Even so, sir.

SKINDEEP. One of those—

SMOKE. One of those luckless creatures—the waifs and strays of the world—to whom life has been hallowed

by no tie; to whom youth has been unthanked drudgery, and childhood at the best a blank. One of those who—never taught the creed of self-respect—just value men as gamblers value dice, mere instruments to juggle with and win.

SKINDEEP. The trickster's apology, to whom the dignity of life —

SMOKE. The dignity of life! Fine words, easily uttered, but hard to estimate by those who know life only by its meanness and its wants.

SKINDEEP. Well, sir, you have owned yourself a schemer—a gambler with the feelings and interests of your fellow-creatures. What more?

SMOKE. Something in extenuation.

[Gives him packet of letters.]

SKINDEEP. What are these?

SIR PHENIX *(aside)*. Letters for his lordship, too. He's on a sudden very white. Can he have a Clotilda, also?

SMOKE. They were written to my mother.

SKINDEEP. Your—your mother!

SMOKE. Betrayed—neglected—left with her child to want—she died.

SIR PHENIX *(aside to SKINDEEP)*. Neglected! Doubtless buried without the humanity of a tombstone.

SKINDEEP *(aside)*. They *are* my letters. Poor Kate! What devil is it makes men write their follies down, to rise against them when the living themselves are dead?

SIR PHENIX *(aside)*. His lordship has sown what he, too, thought wild oats, but they've come up thistles.

SKINDEEP. You Katherine Waller's son?

SPREADWEASEL. Katherine Waller!

SHARK. Quite true, my lord—she died my tenant. I've dodged the captain from the cradle upwards, and can bring twenty to swear to him.

SKINDEEP *(aside)*. He's handsome—clever—all the world, too, must know the story—I—nature's wonderful!—I feel a sudden gush of affection—a torrent of parental love—a—*(throwing himself into SMOKE's arms)*—my son—my son!

Enter WALLER at back.

ALL *(except SMOKE)*. Son!

SKINDEEP. My darling boy! Whom I have sought for years and years! Who has been to me a day-dream—whose vision at night, whose—whose—but I can't speak—I—you

can imagine my feelings—for the human heart has chords—chords—

SPREADWEASEL. — But, my lord, you spoke of one Katherine Waller—

WALLER (*coming down*). Katherine Waller, your youngest sister.

SKINDEEP. Arthur! you here?

WALLER. Fear not. You have acknowledged your son; and my resentment's buried in my sister's grave.

SPREADWEASEL. Sister! And you—you are little Arthur? My brother!

WALLER. One of those whom poverty made hateful to you. I have travelled, toiled, and prospered. For some time I have known your sordid history. When you shall again assume your father's name, and with it somewhat of his plain dealing, your good, glad-hearted daughter here shall join our hands, and we'll again be brothers.

SPREADWEASEL (*aside*). And he's come back rich! Nephew—I give you joy—I give you my blessing—I give you—I give you your bill!

MELON. Nay, for that amount I am your debtor. Still, be generous to your nephew, and think the bond I might exact, is paid.

SKINDEEP. This is delightful! All are recompensed—all.---

CHATHAM. Your pardon, my lord; there is still one person in your house, not yet rewarded. Suffer me to introduce him.—(*Brings down CORKS, who from time to time has been watching at back.*) — Brutus the Elder!

SKINDEEP. What!

CHATHAM. His anxiety to obtain the paper you placed in my hands whetted my curiosity. In your own butler, I found your weekly censor. (*Giving paper to SKINDEEP.*) You know the hand?

SKINDEEP. It is so? And I have warmed a serpent in my own wine-cellar! Here, Kimbo, kick out Brutus the Elder.—(*CORKS runs off.*)

PAMELA (*taking paper from SKINDEEP*). But what can he have said of your lordship?

FLORENTIA. Yes, what can the wicked creature have said?

PAMELA. Hear the last paragraph. (*Reads.*) "When the race of Skindeeps shall practise all they talk, then will they become a social treasure—the very jewels of their kind. But when their goodness is a sound, and their benevolence mere breath, what are they but—but"— (*Forces the paper upon SKINDEEP.*)

SKINDEEP. Humph! (*Reads.*) "Bubbles of a day?"

THE END.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

CAPTAIN CHANNELL, R.N.

LIEUTENANT BASIL FIRMINGHAM, R.N.

TOM HEDDLEY, a Missionsman.

BRADY, a Merchant.

MR. PETER PALMALL.

CHENEY.

THE PRISONER OF WAR.

A COMEDY

IN TWO ACTS.

Enter BASIL FIRMINGHAM, Captain.

BASIL. Eh, Messieurs! the guns!

NICOL. They tell nothing new, Babette! only

Englishmen are missing.

After much negotiation, but without success, was signed at Amiens, March 25th, 1802, and England agreeing to restore all her conquests, except the French settlements in Ceylon, the person named Mr. William Forester, was no more than a French spy, and his government, in order to check the insurrection of Napoleon, sought the renewal of hostilities, and by the restoration of the rights of the British in the East, in this manner, the letter of the treaty of Amiens, which had proved useless, the Minister of England left Paris, March 18th, 1803, and orders were issued for seizing the ships of France in the British ports, and for the restoration of the French in all the British subjects that were on French soil at the time.

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HOBBLES OF THE DAY. [ACT V.]

Passell. (Hears.) "When the robe of Shallop's shall pass off, then will they become a social treasure—the very jewels of their kind. But when their goodness is a sound, and their benevolence mere breath, what are they but—but?"

(Forces.)

Passell. "A day?"

THE PRISONER OF WAR.

COMEDY.

IN TWO ACTS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CAPTAIN CHANNEL, *R.N.*

LIEUTENANT BASIL FIREBRACE, *R.N.*

TOM HEYDAY, *a Midshipman.*

BEAVER, *a Merchant.*

MR. PETER PALLMALL.

CHENILLE.

BOAZ, *a Jew.*

NICOLE.

GAOLER.

Citizens of Verdun.

MONSIEUR LA ROSE.

Garçon.

Captain of the Guard.

English Prisoners.

MADAME LA ROSE.

MADAME VIOLETTE.

BABETTE.

POLLY PALLMALL.

CLARINA CHANNEL.

TIME—1805.

After much negotiation, a treaty of peace was signed at Amiens, March 25th, 1802; England agreeing to restore all her conquests, except Trinidad and the Dutch settlements in Ceylon. The peace, as Mr. Windham foretold, was no more than a truce. The English government, in order to check the inordinate ambition of Napoleon, sought the renewal of hostilities, and refused to restore Malta to the Knights of St. John—in this offending against the letter of the treaty. Discussion having proved useless, the Minister of England left Paris, March 12th, 1803, and orders were issued for seizing the ships of France in the British ports. Buonaparte retaliating by detaining all the British subjects that were in France at the time. —*Russell's History of Modern Europe.*

THE PRISONER OF WAR.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Verdun. Outside of a Café. Parties seated—some drinking, some playing at cards and dominoes. NICOLE playing. As the curtain rises, the discharge of cannon is heard. All except NICOLE rise from their seats. Cannon continues firing.

Enter BABETTE from Café.

BABETTE. Eh, Messieurs, the guns! the guns!

NICOLE. They tell nothing new, Babette; only another Englishman escaped.

FIRST FRENCHMAN. And that promises a good reward to some of us. I'm for pursuit.

SECOND FRENCHMAN. And I!

THIRD FRENCHMAN. And I!

ALL (*except NICOLE*). And I!

FIRST FRENCHMAN. Nicole, remember; the first game is mine: only let me catch this Englishman, and when I've caught him, I'll double the stakes. *Vive la France!* down with the English, and the best luck to the lightest heels! (*Exeunt, shouting:*) "*Vive la France!*" (*Guns firing.*)

BABETTE. And for the honour of France, why doesn't Nicole show his heels too?

NICOLE. I? If all the English had escaped, I wouldn't bring 'em back to Verdun; no, not if even whistling

would do it. Since these sailor bull-dogs have been prisoners here, Verdun's no place for a Frenchman. Now, Babette, what can you see in these English? They drink like swine, dance like bears, and——

BABETTE. Make love like lions.

NICOLE. Love! Isn't there the greatest reason you should hate them? Ar'n't they your foes? Ar'n't you a Frenchwoman?

BABETTE. I always thought so—but Monsieur Pallmall says he's sure there's some mistake.

NICOLE. Monsieur Pallmall! And if you might, you'd marry him?

BABETTE. Delightful! and go and live in London!

NICOLE. You live in London! A butterfly in a dark lantern. You in London! Two Sundays there would kill you: and then the fogs.

BABETTE. All scandal. Monsieur Pallmall, who was born and bred in London, says he never saw a fog till he came to France. Hear him talk of London.

NICOLE. I have heard him. He'll swear that in London it hails lump-sugar, and rains rose-water;—that violets grow at every door, and nightingales sing from every lamp. As I'm a Frenchman, I'll have revenge. This English calf, this Monsieur Pallmall, and that Monsieur Heyday, too —

Enter Boaz.

BOAZ. (*Crossing.*) Heyday! My tear, tell me—he is not escaped—it is not Heyday?

BABETTE. Not he, Boaz, be sure on't. Monsieur Heyday fly from Verdum! No, no, I'll answer for him.

BOAZ. Vell, vell, ven I heard de guns, I had my fears. Ha!—de guns, my tear! de guns! Every von goes to my heart.

NICOLE. To your heart?—to your pocket, you mean.

BOAZ. And dat is vorser. Oh! vot I lose by dese English dat run away! Vot I lose nobody knows. Friday night, dere vent fifty napoleons vid de rogue dey killed.

BABETTE. Poor young fellow! He was discovered crossing the moat, and shot by the sentinel. I'm sure I cried so when I heard of it.

BOAZ. Cried! Vot, did you lose fifty napoleons? No? Oh, my tear, you don't know what crying is.

NICOLE. But, good Jew, if you lose so much by them, why do you lend money to these English?

BOAZ. Must employ my mind, my tear.

Shouting without, and re-enter Frenchman.

FIRST FRENCHMAN. Hurrah! the bird's caught again.

BOAZ. Caught! Who is he? What is he?

FIRST FRENCHMAN. Caught before he was well off the perch. He fought like a devil, but a sabre cut settled him.

BABETTE. Killed!

BOAZ. Killed! horrible! shocking! Murder! (*taking out his memorandum-book.*) Vot's his name?

SECOND FRENCHMAN. I think they called him Smith.

BOAZ. Smith!—catch me! I am tead! (*Falls into NICOLE'S arms.*)

FIRST FRENCHMAN. Yes, Lieutenant Sampson Smith. The Sampson I'll swear to.

BOAZ. (*Looking at book.*) I am better: my Smith is John.

BABETTE. Poor soul! and is he really killed?

FIRST FRENCHMAN. Killed! Oh no, carved a little, nothing more. And now Nicole, for a second game.

NICOLE. Not I—a plague on these English dogs, say I! They've spoilt Verdun.

Enter PALLMALL.

PALLMALL. Politeness, Monsieur Nicole, politeness to the captive. If we are dogs, can't you skin us and be civil?

BABETTE. Oh, Monsieur Pallmall, never mind Nicole. Doesn't all Verdun love the dear prisoners, the charming English?

BOAZ. Ar'n't all our houses open to you?

PALLMALL. All. In Ireland the pig pays the rent: in Verdun the pig's an Englishman. Oh, only to see how your housekeepers squabble for a lodger! Such hospitality! I was never so fought for by the women in all my life.

BOAZ. And isn't our pockets open to you—isn't my pocket open?

PALLMALL. Open as a rat-trap: but I shan't nibble, Boaz. No, you don't toast cheese for me. As for the innocent sailors—the poor salt-water babes that you swallow like oysters, by the dozen——

BOAZ. Vot would dey do vidout me? Ven deir allowance is gone, vy den——

PALLMALL. Gone! It never comes; you pounce upon it by the way, like an old hawk on a carrier-pigeon.

BOAZ. Dey vill drink — dey vill gamble — poor tings — only to lose de time.

PALLMALL. And you'll be gambled with for tempting 'em, brave unsuspecting fellows! You'll be one of the devil's dice, depend on't.

BOAZ. Mr. Mallpall! Devil's dice!

PALLMALL. Listen. He'll find two rascally money-lenders — if he can — with as many spots upon them as yourself: and, on nights of chicken hazard, he'll rattle you all three together in a red-hot dice-box. That's your fate.

BOAZ. Ha! Mr. Mallpall! vot I do ish kindness. I have no profits — de taxes eats up all.

BABETTE. Yes, indeed — since the war, the taxes are dreadful.

PALLMALL. And comes of being born in France — should live in England.

BABETTE. What, have you never a tax in England?

PALLMALL. We haven't the word in our language. There are two or three duties, to be sure; but then, with us, duties are pleasures. As for taxes, you'd make an Englishman stare only to mention such things.

BOAZ. Inteed? ha! ha! charming place! Den vidout taxes how do you keep up de government?

PALLMALL. Keep it up? Like an hour-glass: when one side's quite run out, we turn up the other and go on again.

BOAZ. And nobody paid for turning, I suppose. Ha! ha! Vell, vell! good morning, Mr. Mallpall; and if ever you vant Boaz de Jew —

PALLMALL. I want nothing. I'm a philosopher, and can play the flute. [*Exit BOAZ into Café.*]

BABETTE. That you can.

PALLMALL. Or how should I get through my captivity? Half the morning I devote to "God save the King," while the afternoons I give to "Barney, leave the girls alone."

BABETTE. And I've remarked you never play anything but those two tunes.

PALLMALL. Never; and that on the finest patriotic principle. — (*Aside.*) I don't know any other.

[*Exeunt into Café.*]

Enter BASIL FIREBRACE, followed by MADAME LA ROSE and MADAME VIOLETTE.

FIREBRACE. My dear ladies, may a man be heard?

MAD. LA ROSE. Brave Captain Firebrace!

MAD. VIOLETTE. Sweet admiral!

FIREBRACE. Captain!—admiral!—Here are jumps for a poor lieutenant.

MAD. LA ROSE. I tell you, madam, the captain promised me.

MAD. VIOLETTE. Me, madam, me! I have the admiral's honourable word. (*Taking his arm.*)

MAD. LA ROSE. I won't give up my lodger, I'll perish first. (*Takes his right arm.*)

FIREBRACE. Sharp fighting, ladies, for so poor a craft. If you think the vessel freighted with gold, you'll be plaguily disappointed with your prize-money. They've grappled me rarely! My dears, if you'd only fight for a ship as you do for a lodger, give me, I say, such a boarding party.

MAD. VIOLETTE. You promised me, brave captain.

MAD. LA ROSE. The captain promised me, and even though I struggled, would kiss me, as he said to bind the bargain.

FIREBRACE. I kissed and promised. Such beautiful lips! Man's usual fate, I was lost upon the coral reefs.

MAD. LA ROSE. And as you, Madame Violette, can show no such claims——

FIREBRACE. That's true, and must be remedied. (*Kisses MAD. VIOLETTE.*) So now, my dears, you both start fair again.

MAD. LA ROSE. You'll find my house, brave captain, quite Elysium. Such a bedroom—painted with Telemachus, besides Adam and Eve in white china on the mantel-piece. Then, if you've a passion for digging, such a garden! If you're a sportsman, such sparrows! And, if you doat on dogs of genius, such a poodle!

FIREBRACE. Any children?

MAD. LA ROSE. Not in the slightest.

FIREBRACE. Sorry for that—I like children. I'd have four brats on my knees, as many on my back, and a couple on my shoulders. I like their laughter, their noise.

MAD. VIOLETTE. Unhappily, we have only four: but I assure you they make quite as much noise as any ten. As for your bed-room, for a week you'll hardly sleep for admiring it. In a word, our house is furnished to cheat the captive——

FIREBRACE. I've no doubt of it.

MAD. VIOLETTE. Of his captivity. We've a cockatoo that talks like any lady—and when you're melancholy, and your thoughts are wandering to your friends, we've a sweet little monkey for you to play with, and so bring you back to yourself again.

MAD. LA ROSE. If the captain loves music, Monsieur La Rose gives lessons on the horn.

MAD. VIOLETTE. We rear canary birds, and the admiral may have all the twenty cages in his own apartment.

FIREBRACE. Was ever man so tempted? On one side Adam and Eve for moral reflections; the free use of a spade and sparrow shooting; a poodle of genius and lessons on the horn. On the other, four children, equal to ten; a bed-room not to be slept in, a talkative cockatoo, the consolations of a monkey, and a whole forest of breeding canaries. Truly, ladies, your offers are so equal, your claims so perplexing—that how to decide? I—yes, I see a way—suppose you play for me. (*Going to table, where are cards.*)

BOTH. Play!

FIREBRACE. Or as time presses, and I mustn't say much for the stakes, cut a card for me? Anything. Or shall I deal the cards, and she who has the first knave takes me?

MAD. LA ROSE. Sweet captain, for your sake alone, if it must be, I'll take a hand at piquet.

MAD. VIOLETTE. For your sake alone, admiral.

FIREBRACE. Admirably resolved. (*Places chairs for MAD. LA ROSE and for MAD. VIOLETTE.*) Now for piquet! And fortune, hear a poor lieutenant's invocation! May the best landlady win. (*Stands watching them.*)

Enter TOM HEYDAY and POLLY PALLMALL, laughing.

POLLY. Oh, Mr. Heyday! Well, you do talk. If brother Peter was to hear you——

HEYDAY. Hang brother Peter, I say! Wait, Polly Pallmall, only wait till I am a lieutenant.

POLLY. Yes, if some French duchess, with her coach and diamonds, doesn't take you off before. Still, you mustn't scold Peter; he is a little odd, but so good. Who knows? Some day I may be able to persuade him to buy you an admiral's commission. By the way, what's your pay—I mean, what's the pay of a midshipman?

HEYDAY. The pay? The pay, Polly, is not enormous; but the perquisites are extraordinary. Yes, we're always getting something that we don't care to talk about. But ah! Polly, when you go to London, you'll be marrying some lubberly lord mayor, and forget Tom Heyday.

POLLY. If ever I do, Tom, throw away the huswife I've made you, and marry the first French duchess that puts the question.

HEYDAY. Then you'd like to be a sailor's wife? You love the sea?

POLLY. Doat upon it,—from the beach. Oh, dear! when we came to France, what I did suffer! I then told Peter, and I stand to it now, whenever we go back to England, if it cost a hundred guineas, I'll ride every step of the way.

HEYDAY. And what did Peter say?

POLLY. Like a good kind fellow as he is, he said, So, my dear Polly, you shall. But when shall we go? Brother says we are to be exchanged. I have no pride: so we only go, I don't care what they take for us. I do nothing but dream of our nice drawing-room carpet, our bright stoves, crackling coal-fires, and the muffin bell.

HEYDAY. There, Polly—don't cry.

POLLY. I can't help it. When I think of these things, I feel, as Peter says, quite a patriot.

Enter PALLMALL from the Café.

PALLMALL. (*Aside.*) Sister Polly again with that midshipman. (*Comes down.*) Miss Pallmall, you have duties at home. Mr. Heyday, I shall speak to your superior officer.

HEYDAY. Here she is: what have you to say to her? Yes, we've overhauled the matter, and you're to be my brother, Peter. (*Crosses to him.*)

PALLMALL. Brother to a beggar—without a shilling, without a hope!

HEYDAY. Avast, Peter! I'll not brag about the shillings; but in the cockpit they let us have any allowance of hope. So haven't I hope and a sword?

PALLMALL. I'd rather you had a goose and a needle. Polly, if you marry there, you marry without a penny. In six months a cannon-ball may make you a midshipman's widow, and then how will you live?

POLLY. (*Crosses.*) I shall not trouble you, sir. As a midshipman's widow, I shall live upon my pension.

PALLMALL. Live upon your moonshine! Home with you—home!

POLLY. Now Peter. (*Moving up the stage backwards, she runs against FIREBRACE.*)

FIREBRACE. Eh, my pretty countrywoman! An Englishman! and—what!—my old shipmate, Tom Heyday.

HEYDAY. Basil Firebrace—no, hang it!—I'm not glad to see you here. Well! how are you? Caught like the rest of us by Jean Crapaud? Tell me—no it can't

be.—They've never had the impudence to take the old Invincible?

FIREBRACE. No, no, I left her, obtained my commission only six weeks since. 'Tis a long story, and will serve with our grog; but the short of it is, a heavy gale, and a lee shore. We ran hard aground; the Frenchmen came down upon us,—we made fight, but 'twas hard work, fifty to one; the end was, we were caught, and in a few days began our march to Verdun. I arrived this afternoon, showed to the commandant, obtained parole, and here, with heavy heart, though laughing face, Tom, here I am, prisoner of war.

HEYDAY. And here are three hundred of us, of no more service to Old England than a dead marine. Still things might have been worse; for brandy's cheap, and the women doat upon us. So Basil, my boy, you shall laugh and drink, and—eh! avast—you're lieutenant now, and Tom Heyday's but a reefer still.

FIREBRACE. My friend, Tom, my old, young friend, whatever I may be. A prisoner of war, I've something at my heart, something that makes captivity bitter indeed.

HEYDAY. Captivity! Humph! 'tisn't a sweet draught, drink it from as fine a cup as you may; but wry faces don't help it down; so laugh, laugh and swallow. Here's an Englishman—a—a—philosopher.

FIREBRACE. Of what ship, sir?

PALLMALL. What ship? Of the London, sir; an excellent ship; fool that I was to quit her. I'd no watch to keep, feared no weather, ate when I liked, drank when I chose, took my own liberty days; and, more than all, was my own purser.

FIREBRACE. I might have discovered as much—a sleek citizen caught on the wing by Buonaparte.

POLLY. And very shameful conduct of him. They said peace was made, and all was comfortable, and so brother Peter and I thought we'd go to Paris for a week, just to learn the language, and look at the new bonnets.

FIREBRACE. A most commendable purpose.

PALLMALL. She says nothing of the smuggling; but with her 't was lace, not language. The peace of Amiens! If ever I trust to any peace of Buonaparte's making——

POLLY.—All your own fault—for still they might have let us live in Paris, but for that shocking habit of yours.

PALLMALL. Patriotism, Polly, patriotism.

POLLY. Patriotism! Would you think it, sir? he quarrelled with some French dragoons, because he would insist that the best cocoa-nuts grew on Primrose-hill, and that birds of paradise flew about St. James's.

PALLMALL. And wasn't that patriotism? They abused the British climate, and I championed my native air. As a sailor, isn't it your duty to die for your country?

FIREBRACE. Most certainly.

PALLMALL. As a civilian, 'tis mine to lie for her. Courage is n't confined to fighting. No, no—whenever a Frenchman throws me down a lie—for the honour of England, I always trump it.

POLLY. Yes, brother; but recollect, how very often you play the first card.

PALLMALL. And if I do colour England up a little for these Frenchmen, after all, 'tis but a little; just a touch here, and a touch there.

FIREBRACE. Take a sailor's advice, sir; don't colour at all. Where nature has done so well, there's little need of paint or patches.

POLLY. What a lovely sentiment! Why couldn't I think of it when Ma'amselle la Nymphe wanted me to wear rouge?

MADAME LA ROSE *runs down the stage followed by*

MADAME VIOLETTE.

MAD. LA ROSE. Victoire! Victoire! dear Captain, victoire!

FIREBRACE. What! am I to consider myself disposed of? And Madame la Rose, are you the fortunate possessor?

MAD. LA ROSE. I am that happy woman.

POLLY. Well, if ever! And has our landlady been playing cards for a lodger?

PALLMALL. Why not? Though, considering the worth of an Englishman in this town, 'tis very high gambling.

POLLY. Well! I'm glad she has won, however. (*Goes up with PETER.*)

MAD. LA ROSE. (*Giving card to FIREBRACE.*) Our address, sir—we sup at nine; we shall be so happy—you'll so doat upon Psyche.

FIREBRACE. Psyche! Is she handsome?

MAD. LA ROSE. Beautiful—and can do everything but speak.

FIREBRACE. The perfection of a woman.

MAD. LA ROSE. Woman!

FIREBRACE. Eh!—oh! I see—ha! ha! the poodle.

MAD. LA ROSE. The poodle. To say nothing of your next-door neighbour, such a nice old Englishman! And he has a daughter who sings—

FIREBRACE. Sings? Humph! and plays the piano with the window up, no doubt? (*Aside.*) I wish I had known that.

POLLY. Oh, she plays beautiful! The trebles, and the tenors, and the basses, all mixed up together, with such shaking!

FIREBRACE. I know; musketry, swivels, and heavy guns. (*Aside.*) I'd rather have fallen to the cockatoo and monkey.

HEYDAY. And, Basil, you must keep a good look-out—all here, English and French, give chase to her. Such eyes for killing! Small-arms in the tops are as nothing to 'em.

FIREBRACE. (*Aside to him.*) Ha, Tom! I'll tell you a secret. 'Tis my faith, and I shall die in it, there is but one pair of eyes in all the world.

HEYDAY. What! captured, and taken in tow already? Then old Channel's girl—

FIREBRACE. Who? Channel? Captain Channel! The—the—don't speak—not a word—the Channel of—the Temeraire?

HEYDAY. Old Dick Channel of the Temeraire.

FIREBRACE. He is not here!

HEYDAY. He was, half an hour since; for I saw him. He and his daughter are here. The old tar went to Paris, like other fools, in the peace. He made a run for it, but was taken with the girl on the coast. Here he is on parole, and here is Miss Clarina with him. What, Basil! why you're as white as a purser's clerk at the first broadside.

FIREBRACE. Not so, Tom. I—I—was but startled at the trick of fortune, the—ha! ha!—the chance of war, to bring us here—here together. (*Aside.*) My wife! my blessed one!

HEYDAY. Why, man, you trembled, and—

FIREBRACE. Tremble?—tut! I own I am astonished—delighted; ha! ha! yes, delighted; for I know old Channel—an excellent fellow. I must see him, and immediately.

HEYDAY. He is now at the Café Imperial, here to the larboard. I'll take you there.

FIREBRACE (*to MAD. LA ROSE*). And the captain is your neighbour—your next-door neighbour? And your

house—it isn't far? No? I thought not. Bear up, then!

HEYDAY. But larboard lies the captain.

FIREBRACE. Starboard the lodging. I must, you know, look at my lodging, must look at my berth, and after pay my respects to the captain. In this case, comfort first, and then duty. And so, in my eyes thou most lovely of landladies, having such a neighbour,—out reefs, and crowd sails of the harbour!

[*Exit with MAD. LA ROSE his arm round her waist.*]

MAD. VIOLETTE. His arm about her waist! I have had a most fortunate deliverance. [*Exit MAD. VIOLETTE.*]

POLLY. Ha! ha! how the lieutenant flies—and how he makes our little landlady fly too!

PALLMALL. And now they stop at Madame la Rose's door—and now——

POLLY. The lieutenant runs to the next house! Now he knocks, I'd swear it, a true lover's knock—and now——

PALLMALL. He's vanished, and the Frenchwoman twirls round and round, and lifts up her hands for her lodger. So, so: I think Captain Channel had better hasten home. If I see him, 't will be neighbourly to hint as much.

POLLY. There again! Because you haven't the heart to fall in love yourself, you must spoil the little love of every body else; just like the boy who blabbed about the stolen apples, only because he hadn't the courage to go into the orchard.

HEYDAY. Not so, Polly. Peter want Courage! only ask Babette—ask her——

PALLMALL. Nothing impertinent. If I do prattle with Babette, 't is only for the sake of her French.

POLLY. Her French! ha! ha! ha!

PALLMALL. I'm sure she has a delicious accent.

POLLY. No doubt. I caught you taking it from her very lips only yesterday.

PALLMALL. Polly Pallmall, I am your elder brother—and—and—in a word, no man makes a fool of himself, who is not justified by such folly, in preventing the rest of his family from following his example. So take my fraternal arm—come home; and to employ your mind, translate “Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded.” As for this love nonsense, my friend, we shall be exchanged soon and go to London. (*Going with POLLY.*)

HEYDAY. Go to London! Then I wish you would do me this little favour; just call upon the lords of the

admiralty, and tell 'em after fourteen years' service — for it must have slipped their memories—that Tom Heyday's only a midshipman still.

PALLMALL. With pleasure; I promise it. And should their lordships condescend to take the hint, I shall be happy to see you—when they've made you rear-admiral.

[POLLY and TOM slip round, and meet at back, they kiss—PALLMALL sees them, runs to POLLY and drags her off—HEYDAY goes off, laughing.]

SCENE II.

CAPTAIN CHANNEL'S Lodgings.

Two chairs brought on—CLARINA and FIREBRACE enter.

FIREBRACE. Clarina, dear Clarina! your voice—oh, it hath been with me in battle and in tempest!—let me hear it now—sweet love—dear wife!

CLARINA. I did not think joy had so fierce a moment. Basil!—husband!

FIREBRACE. That word! husband! It fills my heart with bliss—my eyes with tears. There—so—we must laugh now—laugh, love—laugh! Hang it! no—my heart's too full for laughter yet!

CLARINA. This sudden happiness! It makes me childish. I almost fear to quit your hand lest I should wake—as I have waked—from dreams, to find you gone.

FIREBRACE. I have had my dreams too—dreamt with open eyes. Ha! many a time have you walked the middle watch with me. When the sky was pitch, the wind a gale, and the sea mountains—then have you paced the deck with me—then have I felt you nestling at my arm—then have I looked into your loving eyes, and my heart has melted at your gentle voice.

CLARINA. Was I so often with you? Had you indeed such visions?

FIREBRACE. Or I had died of melancholy. If fancy did not sometimes cheat the sailor's heart with sounds and faces bought from home, the heart must break, be sure on't.

CLARINA. I have so much to tell you!

FIREBRACE. And you shall tell it—tell it again and again—and I'll listen as though I heard a mermaid sing. I will, by this kiss! Ha, wife! now I look into your

eyes, taste the sweetness of your lip, I know this is no shipboard fancy—no fading vision of the middle watch.

CLARINA. And my own history told—all the hopes—the cares thus—Hark!

FIREBRACE. What alarms you, wife?

CLARINA. Oh, that name!—so dear and yet so terrible!

FIREBRACE. Terrible!

CLARINA. I thought I heard my father's step; and the sound that should be music to a daughter's ear, struck to my heart reproach and terror.

FIREBRACE. Even yet he knows not of our marriage?

CLARINA. No—though a hundred times I have been tortured to declare it.

FIREBRACE. Tortured, and for me! He suspects and persecutes you?

CLARINA. No. His love for me—I did not think it possible—increases with his years. So kind, so generous—to me so gentle! There's not a day he does not call me his frank—his honest child! And when he has heard of disobedience such as mine, he has caught me in his arms, and pitying the parent so deceived, with pride has called me his own true-hearted girl—his noble daughter. Was not this torture?

FIREBRACE. It must be ended—shall be.

CLARINA. Not yet—I have your promise, Basil?

FIREBRACE. Nay, my oath. You asked my promise. 'T was your first bridal request; and in the gratitude of an exulting heart, I swore never to divulge our secret—you not consenting. I know the place—the time. Two years since—

CLARINA. Two years this very day. Do you not recollect this dress? I have worn it only one day since we parted.

FIREBRACE. I led you from the altar. At the church door took a husband's first—last kiss, and with a mournful, yet a hoping heart, departed for the ocean. I return—return upon my wedding day! a happy omen. So, no tears—no more tears, Clarina.

CLARINA. Oh, Basil! my joy, my gratitude, to meet you still the same—

FIREBRACE. Stay; I am not the same.

CLARINA. No!

FIREBRACE. No—love has made me forget my dignity. I left a poor, almost hopeless midshipman—I return lieutenant. See, here's my commission; almost the only

thing I've kept from Frenchmen's fingers. Here it is; and say—is't not a pretty present for a wedding day? Yes—a lieutenant's lady. Fortune means nobly by us—or she had never brought me back at such a moment. I see it all! I shall soon get exchanged—the war continues—now lieutenant—soon commander—captain—admiral—a knighthood—an earldom and yes, I see you at court—and myself, after some fifty years, honourably laid in Westminster Abbey. Ha, ha! what say you to the prospect, wife?

CLARINA. Beautiful! though I hope, Basil, I may never see its termination.

FIREBRACE. Nay, a sad look is ingratitude to fortune; so laugh, Clarina, laugh; and remembering that you are now a lieutenant's wife, you shall tell the story of our disobedience; or rather, you shall let me tell it to your father, who will swear—storm—and then most heartily bless us. So not another tear, no—though 't were worth a diamond. The captain is so noble—so generous—

Enter CAPTAIN CHANNEL and BEAVER.

CHANNEL. What's that of the captain? Come, youngster, don't make my girl blush with fine speeches about her father.

FIREBRACE. Dear sir—I am happy, rejoiced to see you.

CHANNEL. Then, sir, your happiness is devilish impertinent; and you rejoice like a traitor. I am not happy to see you. No—it makes me unhappy to see another English face. I would I were the only Englishman here—yes, the Robinson Crusoe among the savages. Well—how are you, Basil—how are you, boy? Though I would rather you were at the devil than here, for you are a fine fellow: still, how are you?

FIREBRACE. Well, sir, well—and as happy as I can be in such a place.

CHANNEL. So, you ran aground, eh? Tom Heyday's told me the yarn. Aground! what a beautiful world this would be, if it was all salt water. Still you had a fight for it—you weren't caught as I was, like an old woman in a shower, without her umbrella. Ugh! I must go to Paris!

CLARINA (*crosses to him*). Dear father, why this constant self-reproach?

CHANNEL. No reproach at all, girl. I'm glad they caught me. I deserved it. I was an ass—a gull—a greenhorn; yes, green as a leek, at sixty. I now should have

been upon my own beautiful quarter-deck, treating the rascals with grape and canister—and here I am, doomed for my sins to hear them crow over us, and to gulp their brandy. Wheugh! But I deserve it—I'm glad I've got it, glad—devilish glad.

FIREBRACE. Why, sir, I take it time here must move heavily.

CHANNEL. Not at all, sir. Nothing moves heavily in France—here Time himself is a dancing-master. No, never was better occupied—don't stare—never!

FIREBRACE. How, sir?

CHANNEL. How? In the first place, we make paper boats, and swim 'em in the gutter; then we teach the little boys to sing "Rule, Britannia," and pay 'em for doing it; and then, when we want a long, loud, wholesome laugh—is n't there Buonaparte—good fellow! who writes his bulletins especially to amuse us? Besides this, don't they allow us cards and dice, that we may pick pockets without being hanged for it?

FIREBRACE. Truly, sir, the recreations are numerous.

CHANNEL (*crosses*). Yet I'll give you a little bit of advice. As you must employ your time, buy a parrot, and for the honour of your country, teach her every word of Magna Charta.

FIREBRACE. I acknowledge the patriotism of the task, but fear my merits as a schoolmaster.

CHANNEL. Above all—if you'd keep your parole, keep quiet. Else they've an ugly place they call the Fortress of Biche, and to that they march you off, and when there, stow you in cells no bigger than stone bottles. Yes, Biche is the word of terror here. Biche—Biche—everything Biche. They'll send you there for only looking bilious, sneezing too loud, or even fighting with a handful of Frenchmen. Biche—but I'll not swear.

FIREBRACE. Thanks for your counsel, sir. I hope to prove a most peaceful, exemplary prisoner.

CHANNEL. You always were a sensible, spirited fellow, and so was your father, whom I loved dearly. Yes, Basil, I know you are as incapable of senseless riot, as of the least falsehood, the slightest deceit. I've always said so to Clarina; haven't I, girl?

CLARINA. Yes, sir—yes. But, father, you have forgotten Mr. Beaver.

CHANNEL. Your pardon, Beaver—(*crosses to him*) the truth is, I was so glad to see Basil. No—not glad—but you know what I'd say. Here, Basil. Mr. Beaver—an Englishman—a merchant. Beaver, my young friend, Basil

FIREBRACE. (*Aside to BASIL.*) An excellent fellow is Beaver: none of your fair-weather craft—but taut—trim, and seaworthy—and—but this is a secret—devilish fond of Clarina. (*Aside to BEAVER.*) A noble lad, that Basil; if bullets spare him, he'll be an admiral, depend on it. (*Brings forward a chair and sits.*)

BEAVER (*to BASIL*). Sir, 't will be to me a happiness to make the friendship of one so honoured by the esteem of Captain Channel.

FIREBRACE. Sir—I—I—(*aside.*) 'S death! Why do I stammer at him? I—'t will give me pleasure, sir—to—to—(*sits.*)

CHANNEL. There, that will do—you both know what you both mean. Well, Basil, only to think that we three should meet here prisoners! Do you recollect, you dog, two years ago, when you were at my little wigwam, just out of Yarmouth?

FIREBRACE. Recollect, sir!—It has formed the subject of my happiest remembrance.

BEAVER. (*Aside.*) Has it so?

CHANNEL. We were merry, to be sure! I never was such a boy in all my life. Do you remember that evening, when I'd the gout, when you wagered I couldn't go aloft in the apple-tree?

FIREBRACE. To be sure, sir—ha! ha!

CHANNEL. I laid I could, and I sent you and Clary round the walk into the paddock to see me come out perched upon the truck of it; and, you dog, don't you remember—ha! ha! how I pelted you with pippins, that you were both glad to run away, and hide yourselves, eh? (*CHANNEL and FIREBRACE laugh heartily.*) Well; we were merry then. When your leave was up, and you went abroad, I'm sure I missed you; and for Clary here—(*she is leaning over his chair*) I don't know how it was, but she was dull as a dogfish.

BEAVER (*aside*). Indeed?

[*Drums heard in the street, beating the retreat.*]

FIREBRACE. What's that?

CHANNEL. That! That means, all of us must go to bed (*they rise and put chairs back*), or seem to go to bed. That's their evening hymn upon parchment. Od's, Basil! have you secured a berth?

FIREBRACE. Yes, sir; I had forgotten to say, I am your next-door neighbour.

CHANNEL. What, one of the chickens to be picked by Madame la Rose? Not that she's the worst of 'em. Next door, eh?

FIREBRACE. Yes, sir; my window, as my landlady tells me, is the left one, looking into your garden.

CHANNEL. Why, you and Beaver will be messmates then. He's aboard that ship too.

BEAVER. And most happy that it has fallen so. I trust we shall soon be fast friends.

FIREBRACE. I hope so.

CHANNEL. There, belay fine speeches, and—but here comes your she-captain, purser, and all.

Enter MADAME LA ROSE.

MAD. LA ROSE. A million pardons, sweet lieutenant.

FIREBRACE (*aside*). Lieutenant! now she has secured me, she drops the captain.

MAD. LA ROSE. A million pardons—supper smokes.

[*Exit.*

CHANNEL. Then good-night. There, go, like good boys; and mind, I shall have an eye upon you both. (*Aside to BEAVER.*) When they are all turned in, come back. I'll have the door left on the latch, and then we'll finish our chess. Good-night. Come, shake hands with Clarina, both of you.

BEAVER. Fair lady, the sweetest rest attend you.

[*Going.*

FIREBRACE (*to CLARINA*). Good night; good—(*aside*) the words choke me. (*Aside to her.*) The window to the left. Good night, madam; good——

CHANNEL. There, that will do. Good night—good night, all.

[*The drums beat under the window.* CHANNEL leads CLARINA off, BASIL and BEAVER exeunt, bowing to CLARINA.¹

SCENE III.

An Apartment in the House of MADAME LA ROSE. Table laid for supper. Folding windows, and view of garden at back—moonlight.

MAD. LA ROSE, BEAVER, PALLMALL, CHENILLE (*an Officer*), POLLY PALLMALL and others discovered at table—MONSIEUR LA ROSE waiting.

MAD. LA ROSE. Themistocles.

LA ROSE. Here, wife.

MAD. LA ROSE. Wife! Some salt.

¹ Wait till BEAVER is seated before change.

CHENILLE. Monsieur la Rose, this fricandeau of yours is worthy of a statue—*Parole d'honneur!*

PALLMALL. Delicious, Monsieur la Rose. I shall never look on veal again, dead or alive, without thinking of you.

CHENILLE. And for the sauce, a man might eat his own death-warrant with it *Parole d'honneur!*

POLLY. Oh, Mr. Rose, I never did taste such rabbits; they are quite ducks.

MAD. LA ROSE. Oh, Messieurs — Ma'amselle — don't; you'll turn the poor man's brain.

CHENILLE. The fricandeau is divine—the rabbits superb; but I pity you English, you never tasted Monsieur's own dish—his *consommé de grenouilles*; once eat it, and you'd make your will, and die happy—*Parole d'honneur!*

PALLMALL (*aside*). This won't do; must trump him. Pooh! it's nothing; and as for pity—I pity you French. Talk of *consommé de grenouilles*, did you ever taste our *habeas corpus*? Nor you? Nor you? No! Ha!

LA ROSE. In the first place, there is our beautiful little frog—

PALLMALL. Little frog! Pooh! In England the frogs are as big as beavers; aren't they, sir?

BEAVER. Possibly; I am no naturalist.

PALLMALL. Quite as big; and twice as sagacious.

CHENILLE (*to PALLMALL, rising*). *Parole d'honneur?*

PALLMALL (*rising*). *Parole d'honneur!*

MAD. LA ROSE. But where's the lieutenant? He won't take anything—he can't have gone to bed. Themistocles, run up stairs, and—Oh! I'm in such raptures; here he comes.

Enter FIREBRACE.

Themistocles, a chair. My dear lieutenant—Themistocles, the fricandeau!

POLLY. Won't the lieutenant try the rabbits?

FIREBRACE. Thanks—thanks; I thought I was hungry as an ogre, but have somehow lost all appetite; 't is the—the air of Verdun, I believe.

CHENILLE. Beautiful air, Monsieur. No such air in the whole world—*Parole d'honneur!*

PALLMALL. Pooh! nothing to the air of England. That goes ten times as far—it must, you know, for it's ten times as thick.

FIREBRACE. Ha! ha! well said, countryman. But, gentlemen, some wine; a toast with it. Here's a speedy

exchange, or a speedy peace. (*All rise and drink the toast.*)

CHENILLE. Ha, Messieurs, is n't that magnificent Bordeaux?

PALLMALL. Very well for France; but you should taste our London Bordeaux.

[CHENILLE takes his hat and goes off, followed by Guests.]

FIREBRACE (*aside*). I have watched—yet no sign—no sound. There sits my rival! The thought turns my blood to flame. (*Draws his chair and sits.*)

BEAVER (*to FIREBRACE*). You have known the captain some years?

FIREBRACE (*aside*). Yet has he not dared to speak to her. No!—of that I am assured. (*LA ROSE removes supper things.*)

BEAVER. I was observing, sir—

FIREBRACE. Your pardon: my thoughts were absent.

BEAVER. That the captain was no recent friend.

FIREBRACE. I have known him, need I say loved him, since my boyhood. My father died in battle in his arms; the memory of such events draws hearts together with a triple cord.

BEAVER. The—the young lady is handsome?

FIREBRACE. It is her least praise.

BEAVER. Accomplished too?

FIREBRACE. The world allows it.

BEAVER (*rising*). And her heart, I doubt not, is—

FIREBRACE (*rises*). Pure and priceless as a star in heaven!

BEAVER. Oh, sir! I perceive in female excellence you are an enthusiast.

FIREBRACE. I hope so, for I had a mother.

[*Exeunt LA ROSE and MADAME.*]

BEAVER (*aside*). Subtly turned—yet I'll tent him further. The lady will make an admirable wife?

FIREBRACE. Sir, there is no man worthy of her.

BEAVER. Indeed! Truly 't is pitiful that a young lady, from her very excellence, should live and die unpaired, like phoenix.

FIREBRACE (*aside*). There's an insidious meaning in his sneer.

BEAVER. Pity that some men, expressly fashioned for the wonder, had not been vouchsafed us, if only for the sake of this dull wicked world, to multiply examples.

FIREBRACE. Sir, you have chosen a theme—(*the sound of a harp is heard*).

BEAVER. Hush! the lady plays.

FIREBRACE (*aside*). It is her hand. It plucks my heart-strings. (*CLARINA is heard to sing without*).

The dove's in the bough, and the lark's in the corn,
And folded to rest are the lilies of morn;
In balm falls the dew, and the moon's tender light
Robes upland and valley; good night, love, good night!

POLLY. There! a love song—moonlight and all! Isn't it like a novel?

[FIREBRACE, who has during the song retired up the stage, goes through the folding window and off.]

BEAVER (*aside*). He steals to the garden, led by heart and ears. I have no moment to lose; the father's promise once secured, she's mine irrevocably. [*Exit.*]

POLLY. Music and moonlight! They always make me feel quite foolish.

PALLMALL (*who continues eating*). An excellent frican-deau—for France—to be sure.

POLLY (*in abstraction, PALLMALL not attending to her*). Oh, Tom Heyday! I feel now that I could go and sit in one of those arbours, and looking at the moon, with a white handkerchief in one hand and a romance under my elbow, weep deliciously.—Ah! Tom Heyday! I shall never sleep comfortably if I don't first go and cry a little under that willow-tree. (*Going towards garden.*)

PALLMALL. Polly, where are you going?

POLLY. Going to hear the nightingale.

PALLMALL. She's hoarse and does n't sing to-night; so go to bed.

POLLY. Peter, you have no sentiment, no respect for melancholy.

PALLMALL. Respect! If I was to take off my hat to all your blue devils, I should never be covered. To bed with you—I like to hear the nightingale myself, between the sheets.

POLLY. Stars! flowers! dew-drops! moonlight and a lover kneeling! ah, Peter! that's real poetry.

PALLMALL. Real rheumatism, if the gentleman kneels long. Bed, Polly, bed.

POLLY. And then, with faithful ring-doves cooing from a bush. (*Looking off, screams.*) Oh, Peter!

PALLMALL (*rising*). What's the matter?

POLLY. It's a—a spasm. (*Aside.*) 'T is the lieutenant!

PALLMALL. Spasm! I knew how 't would be; it's those rabbits.

POLLY. Rabbits! unromantic fellow! Your vulgarity,

Peter, would kill a whole circulating library. Oh! another stitch! (*Aside.*) Well, if he isn't trying to climb the wall!

PALLMALL. It's the moon—she plays the devil with stitches; so, to bed.

LA ROSE and MADAME come on, with bed candles, and close doors and windows.

POLLY (*aside*). They're locking the door—shutting the windows. If the lieutenant wanted to come in, he'd knock. An appointment! that's real love. I shan't sleep a wink for thinking of 'em.

PALLMALL. To bed, Polly,—I say, to bed. (*Offering her a light which he has taken from LA ROSE.*)

POLLY (*aside*). How he'll swear, and how she'll believe him!

PALLMALL. Bed—bed—bed!

POLLY. Bed! (*Snatches candlestick from him.*) But you'll not be my tyrant always. Bed! No, I shall be married some day, and when I am once married—I'll never—no, I'll never go to bed. Hark! (*The harp is heard, and CLARINA sings without.*)

Thy heart, may it waken to peace, like the dove;
Like the lark, may it offer its gladness above
And lilies, that open their treasures of white,
Resemble thy fortune; good night, love, good night!

[PALLMALL takes out his flute and commences
"God save the King," as the drop descends.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

CAPTAIN CHANNEL'S Apartments; door, cabinet, two candlesticks on table. Garden seen from window.

BEAVER discovered at window.

BEAVER. The love-bird has ceased her ditty. I have heard her sing a hundred times—yet never as to-night; her heart gushed with her voice. 'T was to him she sang—

to him! What curse of fortune is upon me to bring them, and so strangely, together! If she can be mine with peace, with honour, well;—if not, there's nought that brain can plan, or heart can execute, shall stay me. (*Looking from window.*) Ha! he's there! By heavens, beneath her window! The moon streams full upon him. With what assured looks he gazes upwards!—her hand! she leans from out the casement!—She, who seemed the very soul of meekness, she—with frozen, nunlike looks and lips of virgin wax! She!—oh, woman!

Enter CHANNEL carrying a chess-board.

CHANNEL. Here 't is, as we left the game last night.

BEAVER (*abstractedly*). Clouds swim before the moon—and now——

CHANNEL. Swim before the moon! Beaver,—why man, are you writing a sonnet?

BEAVER. The—the beauty of the night, sir—I—

CHANNEL. When I was first in love, I tried that sort of jingle myself. I got as far as “Oh moon,” and there I let go the anchor. (*Sits.*)

BEAVER. Your first love, sir? (*Aside, looking towards window.*) Now I see him not. Your first love, sir?

CHANNEL. As I thought it. Ha! ha! I was then a midshipman of eighteen, and when I first left Plymouth Nancy, there was only one thing that kept me from drowning myself.

BEAVER (*sits*). Indeed, sir, and what was that?

CHANNEL. I tumbled overboard by accident, and didn't like the sensation. At last I was quite cured of my love for Nancy; and who do you think cured me?—why a Jew slop-seller with red hair.

BEAVER. How, sir?

CHANNEL. How? he married her; ha! ha!—Come, Beaver, now for our hard-fought game. Ha! Mr. Beaver, this is kind of you to humour an old sailor; it helps me through the night, for I can't sleep. I, who could have snored afloat upon a hen-coop, can't close my eyes in this—but all's one—here am I—there are you. 'Tis your move, play.

BEAVER. How exquisitely Clarina sang to-night!

CHANNEL. Why the wench can twitter—but that's not chess.

BEAVER (*plays*). There, sir! Did you mark the words of the song?

CHANNEL. Something about good night, though I doubt if she's in bed yet. I don't know how it is, but for these last two years she sits up reading half the night.

BEAVER (*plays carelessly*). Reading at this very hour, no doubt. Her health may suffer.

CHANNEL. Humph! Ha! the queen is—hang chess! a cabin-boy might beat me to-night. Beaver, plain-dealing is my creed; and I think just now, there's something at both our hearts, of greater moment than these bits of ivory.

BEAVER. Rightly divined, sir—at mine, believe me.

CHANNEL. Clarina, eh? Well I have been faithful to you. I've never said a syllable about you, but you're safe there, depend on't.

BEAVER. Forgive my passionate fears, but if another has awakened in her heart the——

CHANNEL. Another! who could he be? You are the only man, I may say, she has seen.

BEAVER. Was not Lieutenant Firebrace once your guest?

CHANNEL. What! Basil! ha! ha! then a boy—a lad, who I believe thought more of the strawberry beds than anything beside. From the hour he left us till this morning, I never heard Clary utter his name—so 't is plain what she thinks of him. No, Basil has taken my advice, and will never marry before he's captain.

BEAVER. And yet, sir——

CHANNEL. Yet! If you were in the church—the ring upon her finger, and the last word said—would you cease your *yets* then?

BEAVER. Oh, sir! that moment!

CHANNEL. That moment shall come next week.—There's my hand upon it. She shall know my wish in the morning, and you shall get her consent in the afternoon.

BEAVER. Should she refuse me?

CHANNEL. There again! Clarina refuse when I bid her! She!—bless her! she'd leap from the maintop-gallant-yard, if I did but raise my finger. Even though she never thought of it, she'd take matrimony as she would take physic, at my simple bidding. Hark! (*Approaching CLARINA'S door.*) Why, the slut! she's not in bed yet.

BEAVER. Sure I heard a voice! (*Aside.*) Can it be he?

CHANNEL (*listening at door*). Reading—reading, loud as a ship's chaplain.

BEAVER (*aside*). Can he be there? No—impossible. Are you certain 'tis your daughter?

CHANNEL. Certain? ha! ha! Who should it be? Beaver, I'll tell you what; I'll punish her for this; and more I'll have this business off my head before I sleep. (*Knocks at chamber door*).

BEAVER. What would you do, sir?

CHANNEL. Do! take her books from her; send her to bed, and bid her think of marriage. I say I will. Stand aside: I'll call you when you're wanted. (*Knocks at door*.) Clarina!

BEAVER (*aside*). And now all's hushed.

CHANNEL. Silent! Humph! she thinks to cheat me. Clarina, I must—I will see you. Clarina, I say! Clarina!

Enter CLARINA from room; she stands at the door. BEAVER retires into the balcony, and off.

CLARINA. Father, dear father—

CHANNEL. Caught, caught! so confess.

CLARINA. Confess! Oh, sir!

CHANNEL. Nay, your guilt is plain. In your eyes, your cheeks, I read your disobedience.

CLARINA (*falls at his feet*). Mercy, mercy, and forgive me.

CHANNEL (*raising her*). Why, Clarina, girl! I am not angry with you—that is, not very angry. (*Aside*.) What an old sea-dog am I, to scare her thus! My child, my dear girl—kiss me, Clarina—you little jade, you've been crying: don't deny it—you have. There are n't real tears enough in this world—real, scalding, bitter tears from breaking hearts, but we must have a parcel of lying books to make people cry double.

CLARINA (*aside*). Books! my secret then is safe. Pardon, dear father; I have indeed been disobedient.

CHANNEL. Now, what idle novel can have kept you from your bed? But why do I ask? when all novels are alike; made as they mix plum puddings, only with one you've a little more spice, and with the other a little more brandy. Come, sit and tell me all about it. 'Twas a love story, of course, that occupied you?

CLARINA. Yes.

CHANNEL. Ha! and the hero? Was he a cut-throat, or only a pickpocket—an amiable barley-sugar ruffian, or a magnanimous rose-coloured house-breaker? When I was young, girls used to read Pilgrim's Progress, Jeremy Taylor, and such books of innocence; now, young ladies know the ways of Newgate as well as the turnkeys.

Then, books gave girls hearty, healthy food; now, silly things, like larks in cages, they live upon hemp seed. Well—the story of the book in that room?

CLARINA. It is a sad one.—The heroine is most unhappy.

CHANNEL. That's usual.

CLARINA. For she has been disobedient.

CHANNEL. That's nothing; for her father's a tyrant, a brute, of course.

CLARINA. The best, the noblest, kindest parent.

CHANNEL. Come, that's civil of the writer; he's not often so considerate. Fathers in novels are generally dragons in white wigs. Well, the girl?

CLARINA. She is married.

CHANNEL. What! unknown to her father, and he, you say, so kind, so good?

CLARINA. Her lover was her father's friend, his youthful friend, loved, assisted by him.

CHANNEL. And the young gentleman, out of pure gratitude, makes a fool of the daughter—the scoundrel. How was the girl smitten? As they kill partridges, at first sight?

CLARINA. The lover was invited to her father's house. When his duties called him thence, 't was then she felt the ties that bound her; 't was then she felt the sweet and bitter grief of early love—of love nurtured in secret and deceit. In one passionate moment, forgetful of her duty as a daughter, heedless of him, whose very glance was affection, whose very word was doting, she cast away the memories of her childhood, the gratitude, the respect of youth, and became a wife—a wretched wife.

CHANNEL. So! the villain who betrayed her duty, turned her tyrant?

CLARINA. No; for years she never saw him; from the day she called him husband.

CHANNEL. Why then wretched?

CLARINA. She still dwelt with her father. The sense of her hypocrisy, like a lingering poison, wore her; and the daily blessing of her father, that should have fallen like balm upon her, self-reproach did turn to blighting and a curse.

CHANNEL. Poor thing! but she deserved to suffer. Well, and the husband? He returned?

CLARINA. He did.

CHANNEL. And the father, of his own sagacity, discovered the match?

CLARINA. Once—they were together—such discovery was nearly made.

CHANNEL. Ha! and the end of the story?

CLARINA. The end? It is not yet accomplished.

CHANNEL. Yes, I see; there you turned down the page when I interrupted you. But I can tell the end of it. Oh, yes, the young couple go upon their knees, the father swears a little, then takes out his pocket handkerchief, wipes his eyes, and forgives them.

CLARINA. Is such the ending? dear father, can you promise it?

CHANNEL. To be sure I can, as well as if I had written it. Don't all novels end so? But if I were the father——

CLARINA. You—the—the—father? Yes, sir?

CHANNEL. I would first shoot the scoundrel who had betrayed my confidence, and for the girl—but I can't think of it! What! a creature, that one's heart is centred in—to think her the dwelling place of honesty, the very shrine of truth, and then to find a cozening gipsy there, a smiling falsehood, a household wickedness!

CLARINA. Father, spare her! (*Sinks on her knees.*)

CHANNEL (*raising her*). Foolish wench! why, if 't were yourself you could hardly feel more than for your paper heroine; a mere thing of goosequill and foolscap; only born in a garret to be buried in a trunk. I'll engage your sympathies for a worthier object. What think you of a real husband?

CLARINA. A husband?

CHANNEL. 'Tis a somewhat unseasonable hour to talk for the first time of such a person; but if young ladies care not to sit up half the night with lovers lent from the library—why, as I say, a real husband can't be an unwelcome intruder among such shadowy company. I say, a husband.

CLARINA. In truth, sir, I—I cannot guess your meaning.

CHANNEL. No? Mr. Beaver's a good-looking fellow, isn't he?

CLARINA. He is your friend, sir.

CHANNEL. And—what I should think not the worst recommendation to a young lady—he loves you very dearly.

CLARINA. He! Oh, impossible!

CHANNEL. Clarina, this is unworthy of you. You are no coquet: you have seen, must have marked this. Briefly, Mr. Beaver has my consent to marry you.

CLARINA. It cannot be—call it back, sir—I entreat,

implore you.—By the deep love you bear me, by all the fondness, the undeserved fondness you have shown me, call back your word—it cannot, cannot be.

CHANNEL. Cannot! Clarina, you know my temper. Though you have felt it not, you know its resolution. Answer me and promise. Stubborn! silent! Humph! Those pestilent books! 'Tis they have turned obedience into folly—have changed a kind, complying, duteous child to—but at least I'll stay that mischief—they shall to the flames. (*Is proceeding to CLARINA'S chamber when she seizes his arm.*)

CLARINA. Father! You must not—do not—do not!

CHANNEL. You promise, then!

CLARINA. To-morrow, give me till to-morrow. (*Drops her head on his hand—aside.*) I saw him—still he lingers.

CHANNEL. That's reasonable; be it so, to-morrow. How now, you're pale and—

CLARINA. The next room, dear father; there the air is freer—the—'tis nothing, I shall be well and suddenly.

CHANNEL. Dear girl, my heart is set on this—'tis now my only care. Think you I could leave you in this rough, this wily world? No; you'll spare my death-bed that pang. I know you will, and so you'll promise—yes, my own good girl, you'll promise?

[*Exit leading CLARINA. BEAVER has watched part of the scene from the balcony. FIREBRACE appears at door of CLARINA'S chamber—he approaches BEAVER, who is about to exit.*]

FIREBRACE. Stay.

BEAVER. You, sir! Here!

FIREBRACE. The astonishment is poorly counterfeited. You have watched me.

BEAVER. Watched?

FIREBRACE. Ay, sir, I marked you,—watched me! 'Twas a manly office, and must be rewarded. I was about to quit yon chamber. I marked you, crouching like a hound—and your eye flashed with triumph as it encountered mine: it fixed me here. I wait your questioning.

BEAVER. Mine? Truly, sir, I have nought to ask—nought to observe.

FIREBRACE. Then, sir, 'tis you must be the hearer. The morning breaks apace. In one hour my friend shall seek you.

BEAVER. What wrong have I to answer?

FIREBRACE. You have dared to act the spy upon my doings—you have dared in thought to stain a woman's

spotless fame—you would intrude yourself within the very sanctuary of her soul—to make a lie, a scandal on her honour.

BEAVER. Wherefore am I censurable? Blame you the man of gold who guards his chest, the man made princely by some precious gem, who watches with a jealous eye the jewel that enriches him? The lady's father has transferred her, sir, to me. You smile.

FIREBRACE. I must. Transferred! It is a jest almost for Plutus. I hear you are a man of commerce. You think a woman's heart a pack of goods, a thing of transfer. See you that star now fading in the light of morning? Make that a matter of exchange; book it in your ledger; barter it from east to west, from north to south: of heaven's beauty make an earthly bargain, and when you have transferred that star, have given full possession of its glory, why, then we'll talk of woman's heart, its market price, its rate of change, its rule of barter.

BEAVER. A prosperous rival! Yes, I see my fate. I may hang myself upon the next willow.

FIREBRACE. Sir, you have my free consent to that immediate operation.

BEAVER. Still vanity assists me! I'll not despair. Here comes the lady's father—will you remain and hear the gentleman?

FIREBRACE (*going towards chamber*). Fear not, sir—I will await him—await you.

BEAVER. And in that chamber?

FIREBRACE. Even there. [*Exit into chamber.*]

BEAVER. At least I may revenge this triumph.

Enter CHANNEL.

CHANNEL. Beaver, give me your hand—'t is certain, fixed. There was a little coyness at first, a few water-drops, but now you're a happy man.

BEAVER. Am I indeed, sir?

CHANNEL. I tell you so, and—why, you hear me talk of your happiness, and yet look as if I preached a funeral sermon.

BEAVER. Truly, sir, I fear my happiness at the present moment needs some such sad discourse. I have a friend, a new friend, who has awakened these doubts. He has forbidden me to hope the happiness you promise me.

CHANNEL. Has he? Then I should like to look upon your friend's brazen countenance.

FIREBRACE *appears at chamber door.*

BEAVER. Will you pardon me? I have admitted him here to satisfy you.

CHANNEL. Where?

BEAVER. There.

CHANNEL. Basil! Well, sir, what have you to say of my daughter? What?

BEAVER. The gentleman may wish for privacy: I will at hand await you. (*Aside.*) The storm will burst; be it my care to profit by the tempest. Chenille's on guard to-night: he shall be at hand to stay, yes, to stay the mischief. [*Exit.*]

CHANNEL. Now, Lieutenant Firebrace -- and first let me repair the neglect of last night, and congratulate you upon your promotion. You have climbed early, sir.

FIREBRACE. Nor may I forget the counsel that taught me best to climb.

CHANNEL. Well, sir, my friend, my excellent friend, Beaver tells me you have forbidden him to hope for my daughter.

FIREBRACE. 'Tis very true, sir.

CHANNEL. May I, as merely the father of the lady, ask why?

FIREBRACE. She cannot wed him.

CHANNEL. Indeed! Do you know any reason to forbid the banns?

FIREBRACE. The best—she cannot love him.

CHANNEL. Lieutenant Firebrace—Basil—I have loved you very dearly—I think I have shown it better than by talking about it. Now, look in my face—look where your father looked for the last time, and tell me, are you a scoundrel?

FIREBRACE. No! Nor lives there but one man, who with safety, though he were high-admiral, might put such word to me.

CHANNEL. You are not a scoundrel? Your hand—forgive me, Basil; I began to have my doubts.

FIREBRACE. And wherefore?

CHANNEL. No, no, I wronged you—I—no,—'t is impossible. You could not, with fair-weather looks and lying words, betray an old man's friendship. You are what I have ever thought you, the son of honour—a frank, noble, generous lad.

FIREBRACE. Spare your commendation and hear me. I love Clarina.

CHANNEL. I'm sorry for it. You speak too late. She marries Mr. Beaver. You look incredulous. Who shall prevent Clarina's marriage?

FIREBRACE. Clarina's plighted heart.

CHANNEL. Plighted—to you! Is it so? Basil Firebrace, you have abused my confidence—with basest fraud destroyed my faith in one whose truth was to me as a religion. A smiling thief I welcomed to my hearth has stolen the duty of my child—the quiet of her father.

Enter CLARINA.

(CHANNEL goes to cabinet and takes out pistols.) I am an old man, sir, but not too old to chastise ingratitude. Follow me, sir.

CLARINA. Father!

CHANNEL. Clarina! Yes, the same look of innocence—the same face, and yet an hypocrite!

CLARINA. Forgive me!

CHANNEL. What a dupe hath my fondness—my unbounded confidence—now I read it all! the tale you feigned to-night—the story of the book—'t was your own story!

CLARINA (*kneeling*). Mercy!

CHANNEL. That man—he was there—in your chamber? Silent! Guilty! Villain, thus I destroy — (CHANNEL presents pistol at FIREBRACE, CLARINA throws herself before him.)

CLARINA. My husband!

Enter CHENILLE and four Gendarmes.

CHENILLE. What's this? Brawling, and it may be murder? Soldiers, your duty. (Soldiers disarm them both.) Conduct these gentlemen to the fortress. (*Aside.*) And thence, or I know little of the governor, to Bîche.

CLARINA. Father!

CHANNEL. Anywhere, so I no longer look on disobedience. [*Exit CHANNEL, preceded by two Gendarmes.*]

CLARINA. Basil! Husband! They will send you hence, far hence, amidst all that makes captivity most terrible.

FIREBRACE. Never think it. The story of this passing quarrel told, we shall be free, be sure of it. So smile, wife! Wife! how sweeter still the word, since to the world I now may utter it! I will not say farewell; for soon, my heart assures me, we again shall meet.

[*Exit, followed by two Gendarmes.*]

CLARINA. Oh, sir, on your report depends their liberty! 'T was but a sudden word—nought else. You would not for so light a cause accuse them?

CHENILLE. I was summoned to prevent a duel, and saw enough to know my presence needful. 'T is the hardest part of duty to speak the truth, when grace and loveliness both bid us hold our tongue. (*Bowing to her.*) Yet, madam, the truth must be said, *parole d'honneur*. So the captain and lieutenant, be sure of it, march hence to Biche.

CLARINA. May I not go with them?

CHENILLE. If the governor be merciful; and when a lady pleads, he has his weakness.

CLARINA. I will petition him this instant. Will you bear my letter?

CHENILLE. Write, madam, and may persuasion guide the crowquill! The governor shall have the letter from this hand. He shall, *parole d'honneur*. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

A Street.

Enter POLLY PALLMALL and MADAME LA ROSE.

POLLY. Good gracious! Captain Channel taken to the fortress?

MAD. LA ROSE. And what's worse, my boarder, Lieutenant Firebrace.

POLLY. Lieutenant Firebrace! Such a noble gentleman.

MAD. LA ROSE. And the smallest eater, my dear, I ever knew.

POLLY. And then my foolish brother, Peter; instead of going quietly to his bed last night—to think that he should quarrel about English eggs and chickens with a French gendarme, and be locked up, too! And dear Tom Heyday! to stop his parole for not answering muster; and how could he, when he was answering me? I see my end. Madame la Rose, I shall die.

MAD. LA ROSE. Yes, Ma'amselle; we all come here on that condition.

POLLY. Ha! to die a comfortable grandmother in one's own parish is what we must all expect; but to be transplanted like a polyanthus in the bud—to be nipped off—and, instead of an epitaph in one's own mother-

tongue, to have an outlandish tombstone that nobody can read!

MAD. LA ROSE. Be comforted; for I promise, whatever they write on one side the stone, shall be faithfully translated on the other. But early as it is, I've news for you from the fortress.

POLLY. The fortress? You go in and out of it as if 't were your own property. What sort of interest have you there?

MAD. LA ROSE. The greatest. My husband, Themistocles, makes the governor's pies.

POLLY. Dear Tom Heyday! What news?

MAD. LA ROSE. This from your brother—this from your lover. (*Giving letters.*)

POLLY. Now here's a trial for one's feelings! Brother—lover! Which shall I open first?

MAD. LA ROSE. Take 'em as we take roasted chestnuts. The coolest first, by all means.

POLLY. Bless me! how confinement spoils one's hand! Peter always writes like copper-plate, and here all the letters seem in a tangle, (*reads*) "Fortress of Verdun, June 1803. My dear Polly—I scratch you these few lines like a mole under ground. The prison is tolerably strong, but not to be spoken of after Newgate. As for their locks, they have n't one fit for a tea-caddy. The rats at night come in regiments. We're allowed no candle; but we can feel, as they run over our faces, that they must be contemptible in the eyes of Englishmen. I am teaching a spider to dance; but find the spiders here nothing to the spiders in our summer-house at Hornsey. I will write more at length upon what concerns you in my next. Excuse this scrawl: for having no pens, we have been compelled to pluck the magpie. Should you see the Frenchman I quarrelled with, remember your country, and don't give up the eggs. Your affectionate brother, Peter Pallmall. P.S.—Send me my flute."

MAD. LA ROSE. Pray do. 'Twill be such a consolation to him on his long march.

POLLY. Poor Peter! That's what he calls philosophy: to march to gaol to his own music.

MAD. LA ROSE. And now for the other! I do so dote upon a love-letter! Read, read.

POLLY. What, my lover's letter? Read that,—to another! Impossible: still, you're such a good creature! I—I tell you what: I'll run it over first myself, and pick you out two or three of the nice bits. (*Retires, reading letter.*)

MAD. LA ROSE. Just like these English girls: they've no real pride in the tender passion. I'm sure when Themistocles used to write to me, I lent his letters to every one of my acquaintance. [*Exit.*]

POLLY. If ever a sheet of letter-paper broke a woman's heart this will break mine. Oh, Tom Heyday! He's going to Biche, and takes leave of me for ever. He says he can't expect me to wait for him, wasting my time till the war's over; so blesses me, sends me a lock of his hair, and tells me to get the best husband I can. (*Remains absorbed in letter.*)

Enter BEAVER.

BEAVER (*aside*). Thus far, my plan has prospered to my dearest wish. The father and the lover both removed—patience and cunning, and my suit must thrive.

POLLY. The best husband! Agonising thought!

BEAVER. What new sorrow's this?

POLLY. But I'll follow him. I'll go to Biche too. If I can't get into the fortress, 't will be some consolation to look at the prison, and know he's safe there. (*Crosses.*)

BEAVER. In tears, my pretty maid?

POLLY (*reading letter*). "Get the best husband you can." Yes, it's very easy to say get.

BEAVER. I fear, some serious news.

POLLY. "As 'tis the fate of your own Tom to be shut up in a dungeon for life, to grow grey and—and—and mouldy."

BEAVER. Tell me, fair mourner, wherefore are you——

POLLY. Mouldy! Cupid, god of love, what a condition! "I send you a lock of my hair." And lovely hair it is too. And this hair to grow grey in a dungeon! Dear Tom Heyday! if I'd my smelling bottle at hand I certainly should faint.

BEAVER. Miss Pallmall, as a friend of your brother's may I be suffered to inquire the source of your affliction?

POLLY (*putting the letter in her bosom, and bursting into tears*). Biche? (*Runs off.*)

BEAVER. The governor, 'tis said, never pardons a duel. Hence, their journey is decided.

Enter MADAME LA ROSE.

MAD. LA ROSE. Oh, sir! do come to Ma'amselle Clarina. Persuade her to stay in Verdun.

BEAVER. To stay in Verdun! what hope has she of going hence?

MAD. LA ROSE. She vows she'll follow her father—has written to the governor for his consent.

BEAVER. This must not—shall not be.

MAD. LA ROSE. Now, sir, you're her father's friend; so write and persuade him to command her to stop here. Tell him I'll watch over her.

BEAVER. Nay, I can safely promise that you'll be a mother to her.

MAD. LA ROSE. A sister, sir, if you please. And say that she can board with me at the most reasonable charge. Tell her so, sir: appeal to her feelings: and above all, don't forget to say that she can have the carnation bedroom, and the butterfly-papered parlour.

BEAVER (*aside*). Determined to follow him! My passion rages with opposition. The hopes, the good name of a life, I'll stake upon this cast. I *will* have her.

[*Going.*]

Enter CHENILLE with two other Gendarmes.

CHENILLE. Monsieur, the governor wants you.

BEAVER. The governor!

CHENILLE. Sorry to do this office for an acquaintance; but duty, Monsieur Beaver, duty. So you must come and be locked up. You must, *parole d'honneur*.

BEAVER. Locked up! In what have I transgressed?

CHENILLE. The muster-roll. You've been called over thrice this morning, and here you were with—well, it's an honourable weakness: but 't will take you to Biche; it will, *parole d'honneur*.

BEAVER. To Biche?

MAD. LA ROSE. What's this? Monsieur to be shut up—what for?

CHENILLE. The muster-roll, madam; the muster-roll.

MAD. LA ROSE. But you'll never take the gentleman away?

CHENILLE. I must—*Parole d'honneur!*

[*Exit BEAVER guarded.*]

MAD. LA ROSE. To lose three boarders in two days! There'll be an earthquake. [*Exit.*]

SCENE III.

Court-yard of the Fortress of Verdun.

Enter CHANNEL followed by FIREBRACE.

CHANNEL. Will you not leave me, sir? Will you not avoid me? (*Crosses.*)

FIREBRACE. Though deaf to me,—yet, by the love you bear Clarina! The fault was mine; 't was I who tempted her: 't was I who forced her from her duty: 't was I who day by day, and hour by hour, assailed her with my prayers—invented subterfuge—coined excuse; with ceaseless persecution of my suit, compelled, betrayed her into disobedience.

CHANNEL. And at that time, day by day you sat at my hearth; and hour by hour you looked in my face. In truth, sir, I never knew so young a man so old a scoundrel.

FIREBRACE. Sir! But I have schooled myself to bear your hardest words. All I ask is, spare Clarina. Could you but know the struggle of her heart—the pain, the suffering of her soul, ere I won from her a wild consent.

CHANNEL. And wherefore all this? Wherefore this stolen match—this lying misery?

FIREBRACE. Wherefore? Could I but have hoped your goodness——

CHANNEL. Sir, it is the creed of honesty always to hope for goodness. But no, sir; you must be cunning—worldly wise. You must crawl to your purpose like a snake, when you might have won it like a man.

FIREBRACE. Oh, sir!

CHANNEL. Basil—Lieutenant Firebrace, you will not add to the rigours of the prison—and t' is said to-morrow we march for one less tolerable—by needless persecution. One moment.—Your father was shot by my side. His only words were—"My wife—my boy—Dick!" he could say no more; but I knew what he meant. I promised. He heard me, for his face—I see it now amidst the hell that roared about us—brightened as his spirit fled. I promised—

FIREBRACE. And nobly, bountifully, fulfilled the pledge. I was a child, but I remembered all, sir; the kindness of your bounty; your name linked with the widow's blessing; your name taught me with my daily prayers. I

recollect a hundred gifts that made our home less desolate—that smoothed the pathway to a mother's early grave. As at her grave I stood an orphan child, I remember how at that dread fall of earth, my young heart sank—remember too the pressure of your hand that told my heart,—“Courage, poor boy, you are not alone.”

CHANNEL. Enough, sir—enough.

FIREBRACE. Oh, sir, these memories *were* precious to me; but now, they pain, they humble me. They make me see my meanness, deceit, ingratitude. They call me villain, that in my selfishness I have given one unquiet thought to goodness such as yours. Oh, sir! by my father—

CHANNEL. 'Tis of him I'd speak. He died, but with the effort of a dying man, he took this ring from his hand, and placed it where I have worn it till this hour. I received it as a pledge between us that I should protect his fatherless boy. I have endeavoured to fulfil the pledge; and now, sir—

FIREBRACE. What would you?

CHANNEL. I would relieve my eye of all that may remind me of that duty past. Henceforth, sir, we are strangers; but 'tis fit, sir, you possess your father's ring.

FIREBRACE. Oh, sir, you will not—cannot—

CHANNEL. Nay, I am resolute. Here it is, sir—*(attempting to take it from his finger, but cannot for his emotion)*—here, sir,—here—plague on't, 't has grown, I think to me, like other things I would fain cut away—but—you shall have it, sir, you—you shall have it.

[Exit.]

FIREBRACE. Oh, worthy heart! I have deserved this, that I feared to trust it.

Enter HEYDAY.

HEYDAY. Now, Basil, the evening watch is hard upon us. We must to our work.

FIREBRACE. What work?

HEYDAY. What work! The work of liberty. Why man, have you slept and forgotten all?—forgotten that, this very night, we're to cut cable?

FIREBRACE. To-night! ay, true.

Enter BEAVER. *He pauses on seeing FIREBRACE and*
HEYDAY.

HEYDAY. Basil! Overhaul your spirits, man! What's afloat? What ails you?

FIREBRACE. I have pondered on this business, and come what will, I'll not quit France.

HEYDAY. Not quit! What, when the work's done to your hand? When fifty brave fellows have tricked their keepers—have toiled this month and more—just, as in the nick of luck, our parole is stopped and we've nought to hinder us from giving Jean Crapaud the slip? The excavation's made, one hour more, and we're outside the fortress.

BEAVER (*aside*). Is it so?

HEYDAY. And you'll not quit it? You'll stay, and to-morrow morning be marched to Biche?

FIREBRACE. You forget. I leave Clarina in Verdun, and with her—

HEYDAY. I understand: you fear that fresh-water pirate, Mr. Beaver.

FIREBRACE. His insolence—nought else. (BEAVER comes down.)

HEYDAY. Look there.

FIREBRACE. Why 't is he!

HEYDAY. Invited as I have just heard into the fortress, for missing muster-roll. Now, then, will you go to Biche?

FIREBRACE. Have with you, Tom—to the work—to the work! [*Exit.*

HEYDAY. And here comes the Jew Boaz. If anything can sweeten the escape, 't is the money I owe that crocodile. (*Retires.*)

Enter BOAZ.

BEAVER. Come hither. Your losses must be heavy?

BOAZ. Heavy! How I stands upright under 'em I don't know.

BEAVER. I have a merchant's feeling for your risks.

BOAZ. Oh, sir, you'll make me weep! I never meets with feelings here—I lends and I lends, and I lozes and I lozes—but still I must employ my mind, so I lends and lozes again.

BEAVER. Should many escape from this prison, your losses—

BOAZ. Don't speak of it: my heart isn't a stone—it must break.

BEAVER. Take this to the governor. (*Having written on a leaf from his pocket-book.*) You will be secret?

BOAZ. As a money-bag.

BEAVER. Remember, as yet I must not be known in this. In good time, I may claim consideration of the

governor; but for the present, silence. I will pay your prudence; and more, you hold that which may hold your debtors.

BOAZ. Den de devil shouldn't tear it from me.

Enter PALLMALL (in morning gown).

PALLMALL. What's that about the devil, Boaz? Gently — don't abuse an old friend. Mr. Beaver! they told me you'd come. Happy, sir, to see you among us. We've all sorts of manly games here, from puss-in-the corner to push-pin. If you like cricket on a small scale, there's a charming court of twelve yards by ten — or, if you have a genius for dominos —

BEAVER. Well, sir?

PALLMALL. You may carve a set out of your own beef-bones — when you get 'em.

HEYDAY. And to-morrow, 't is said, we start for Biche.

BOAZ. And how am I to be paid my twenty napoleons? How, Mr. Heyday — how? Can you look in my face and — (HEYDAY *laughs and exit.*)

PALLMALL. Face! Pooh! Don't call it a face — it's like a bank-note: every line in it means money.

BOAZ. Well, in all my life —

PALLMALL. Nonsense! yours isn't a life: die when you will, 't will only have been a long sneak.

BOAZ. But I'll have my money, I will! and if not of you, (*aside*) at least I'll make my market of de governor.

[*Exit.*

PALLMALL. In truth, sir, I'm glad again to see you among us.

BEAVER. Sir, I acknowledge your hospitality. May I ask you what rendered you worthy of this sudden distinction?

PALLMALL. Patriotism; a small trump I played — nothing more. A little altercation at the Café Impérial. The talk ran upon omelettes: an impudent Frenchman insisted we could n't make 'em. In the first place, he aspersed our eggs — slandered them as small. I replied, our eggs were big as pumpkins. This failed to silence him; for he swore that some of the hens in his country laid eggs three times a day. This would n't do at all — so for the honour of my native poultry, I made English hens lay four times — with chickens in 'em. That's patriotism, I think?

BEAVER. And was the gentleman convinced?

PALLMALL. No, sir: and that's the strangest part of the story. He immediately cast a very strong reflection upon my veracity, which I instantaneously answered by knocking him down. Now, in France, to knock a man down is to knock a gendarme up: there was a brief inquiry made, and—here I am.

BEAVER. And the further trial for your patriotism, Biche?

PALLMALL. We are promised an early march to that rustic retreat. If you're curious in roads, sir, I'm told there's every variety on the way, from flint to quagmire. Look,—here come our brother lambs, driven by the shepherd.

BEAVER (*crosses*). Shepherd!

PALLMALL. The swain who folds us for the night.

Enter HEYDAY and various Prisoners, followed by Gaoler.

HEYDAY (*aside to PALLMALL*). The last night, I hope.

GAOLER. To the souterrain, messieurs—to the souterrain. Quick, quick! (*They cross reluctantly.*)

PALLMALL. Instantly, good monsieur Nightcap. Come along, Tom. (*Aside to HEYDAY.*) I say, I begin to like you. Stone walls draw out the good qualities of a man. Tell me, have you really fobbed that old Jew of twenty napoleons?

HEYDAY. That's true as the north star.

PALLMALL. Give me your hand—you shall have sister Polly. [*All Prisoners exeunt, followed by Gaoler.*]

SCENE IV.

A Souterrain in the Fortress. Prisoners seated round a table, on which is a lighted candle. Other Prisoners coming in and going off at the side. The scene dimly lighted. CHANNEL, FIREBRACE, PALLMALL, and BEAVER, on. All the Prisoners are singing, and PALLMALL playing his flute, to drown the noise without; which, at intervals, is heard through the chorus:

“Rule, Britannia! Britannia, rule the waves!
For Britons never, never shall be slaves.”

HEYDAY (*looking in*). Another stave—another, and the stars will twinkle on us. [*Disappears.*]

CHANNEL. Keep up Britannia, my hearts, though our throats crack! (*All sing:*)

"Rule, Britannia! Britannia, rule the waves!
For Britons never, never shall be slaves."

Re-enter HEYDAY, FOREST, *and other* Prisoners.

HEYDAY. The work's done—our cage is open!

FIRST PRISONER. We've had a rare spell of it, but 't is done at last.

HEYDAY. Luckily, the night is as black as pitch. When we have swum the moat—

PALLMALL. What! must we swim?

HEYDAY. Ay, or sink.

PALLMALL. Oh, I'm enough of a philosopher to know the alternative.

CHANNEL. Well, lads, what we have groaned, have toiled for, is accomplished. Moments are precious. Are all prepared?

ALL (*except* FIREBRACE *and* BEAVER). All! all.

FIREBRACE. May freedom shine upon your paths, and light ye scathless to her home, her old abiding-place, her temple and her rock,—England! Farewell!—I do not quit the fortress.

FIRST PRISONER. Wherefore, sir?

FIREBRACE. It matters not. I am master of my will, accountant solely to myself.

CHANNEL. Not so, sir. This is no private venture. There is no man here—or should be none—who is not inalienably sworn to dare the common peril of this night.

FIREBRACE. Sworn?

CHANNEL. Sir, when men join for freedom, the cause itself doth consecrate the act. To fall from it, or half-way halt in it, is treason to the dignity of human life—is perjury to the first truth of man.

FOREST. Lieutenant Firebrace, I am no talker: but this much I'll say. To skulk in an enemy's gaol when the enemy might be fought upon the sea, is hardly the act of a true sailor; and if you will, I'll add, of an honest man.

FIREBRACE. Fear not, sir: you shall have another time for these opinions.

CHANNEL. Lieutenant Firebrace, will you join us? Or, failing, with some grace of honour, render back your commission to the king?

FIREBRACE. My life, wrung out by torture first! (*Aside.*) To be thus stung, humiliated! Oh, gentlemen, I'll lead you!

CHANNEL. No, sir: as senior officer, that post is mine. Even as runaways we'll keep some discipline.

BEAVER. Captain Channel, as a civilian, I am excused this trial.

FIREBRACE (*to CHANNEL, pointing to BEAVER*). If he remain, I stir not.

CHANNEL. None are excused—none. It is a common cause, and all must bear their part in't.

FIREBRACE (*aside to HEYDAY, pointing to BEAVER*). Tom, let him not slip.

HEYDAY (*aside to BASIL*). Be sure on't.

CHANNEL. And now, gentlemen, a sudden farewell with all.

FIREBRACE (*crosses*). Captain Channel—

CHANNEL. Well, sir?

FIREBRACE. Will you part my enemy?

CHANNEL (*going*). The time is urgent, sir.

FIREBRACE. Oh, think it so. Heaven knows, we ne'er may meet again! For the sake of one you love, part not in anger with me. I have been rash and thankless, but say Farewell, Basil!—let the orphan boy you nourished and protected once more hear your friendly voice, once more grasp your friendly hand. Say, Farewell, Basil—one farewell!

CHANNEL. She has cut me to the soul, and—she has deceived her father—but, poor thing!—do you, sir, love her—do you cherish, doat upon her—do you? Farewell, Firebrace, farewell. On!

[*All the Prisoners are hurrying off, when a party of Soldiers, commanded by Officer, appear with presented arms.*]

OFFICER. Hold!

PRISONERS. Betrayed!

OFFICER. Gentlemen, you mistake the route. This way lies the road to Biche.

CHANNEL (*aside*). Treason, treason!

OFFICER. You have worked well, gentlemen, but have lost your pains. Fall in, and at the word,—march!

Enter CHENILLE, and two Gendarmes.

CHENILLE. Captain Channel, ere you quit Verdun, the governor would grant a lady's prayer.

Enter CLARINA and POLLY PALLMALL.

CLARINA. Father! (*Throwing herself in his arms.*) Leave me not unblest—unpardoned.

CHANNEL. Farewell, wench!—Thou hast my blessing, my forgiveness.

CHENILLE. Stay, Captain; a letter from the governor. (CLARINA crosses behind to BASIL.)

CHANNEL (reads:): "To Captain Channel. Sir, Though I am made the gaoler of brave men, I can yet admire their courage. As a soldier, I am glad that the scoundrel who has betrayed ye does not disgrace the uniform of his king. It would, however, have been my duty to consign you and your comrades to the fortress of Biche. I am happy to be the medium of a better fortune. Enclosed is an order for the exchange of yourself and others therein named, received this morning from the minister.—Viallant, Governor of the Fortress of Verdun." Here's something more. "As for the traitor, Beaver, his destination is"—

CHENILLE (passing BEAVER over to the Soldiers). Biche, —parole d'honneur—Biche. (BEAVER is immediately marched off.)

PALLMALL. Is my name there? (Taking paper.) It is! Then I have friends in London still. (Crosses.)

POLLY. Exchanged! Oh! if I get safe to England, and can only recollect my foreign feelings, won't I write a book! Pray, Captain, I only ask out of humanity, does Mr. Heyday go with us, too?

CHANNEL. Listen. (Reads:): "Thomas Heyday, promoted to lieutenant." So there's a commission to sweeten his voyage with. (PETER takes out his flute and plays "God save the King."—To CLARINA who is endeavouring to read the paper.) What! your eyes would devour the paper. Do you know that name?

CLARINA. "Basil!" Oh, happiness!

CHANNEL. More than he deserves. (Aside.) I'm glad he has got it, for all that. Basil, you saved my daughter from a scoundrel, and though you had no such intention—

CLARINA. Nay, father, did he not best prove it, when he married me?

CHANNEL. Said like a good wife, and therefore prettily said. So, Basil, as you're my son, why die an admiral, and I shall be satisfied.

POLLY. And now, we're all to go to England!

CHANNEL. Not all. Though the list's a long one, many stay behind. (Gives the list to FOREST, the Prisoners eagerly group round him and read.) Therefore, let not those set free, fail in their best wishes for—THE PRISONER OF WAR.

THE END.

DRAMATIC PERSONAE

THE RENT DAY:

THE RENT DAY:

A DOMESTIC DRAMA

IN TWO ACTS.

CRUMBS, BRANSTALK, FARMERS, WIVES and Children,
Servants, &c. The Characters and Stage are arranged
as to form, on the rising of the Curtain, a representation
of Wilkie's Picture "The Rent Day."

CRUMBS. By my lawd, I thought so pleasant as
a rent-day!

BRANSTALK. The best right master Crumbs, I thought
— when the corn was in, and the money in the
bag; but rent-day, wif bad crops and low pockets, be an
awful thing.

FIRST FARMER. It be, indeed. See what it ha' brought
Phil Jones to. That Mistris Crumbs, ha' broke her
heart. Warn't you a bit hasty like?

CRUMBS. Ha, friends, it's a sad task to be steward;
I often seize with tears in my eyes. What then? we must
keep a clear book. I never turn out a family but—(to
one of the Farmers)—you don't drink your ale, master
Stoke—with the greatest reluctance. Last week, when
Miles and his children went to the work-house, it—(to
another Farmer)—help your dame to some pie—it made
me really uneasy. Yet one's feelings must suffer. One
must keep a clear book.

CHARLES. Stay, Captain; a letter from the governor.
(CHARLES crosses behind to BASIL.)

LYONS (reads). "To Captain Channel. Sir, Though I am made the gaoler of brave men, I can yet admire their courage. As a soldier, I am glad that the scoundrel who has betrayed ye does not disgrace the uniform of his king. It would, however, have been my duty to consign you and your comrades to the fortress of Biche. I am happy to be the

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Enclosed is an order for the exchange of yourself and others therein named, received this morning from the minister.—Viviant, Governor of the Fortress of Verdun." Here's something more. "As for the traitor, Beaver, his destination is"—

GRANTLEY.

CHANNEL (passing). (Crosses to the Soldiers). Biche, — parole d'honneur. BEAVER is immediately marched off.

OLD CRUMBS.

MARTIN HEYWOOD.

PALLY. (Takes paper.) It is! Then I have friends in London still. (Crosses.)

TOBY HEYWOOD.

BULLFROG.

POLLY. Exchange! I get safe to England, and can only recollect feelings, won't I write a book? Pray, Captain

SILVER JACK.

Mr. Heyday go with

HYSSOP.

BEANSTALK.

CHANNEL. Listen. "Thomas Heyday, promoted to Lieutenant." So

STEPHEN.

voyage with. (Polly)

First Farmer.

is endeavouring to

Second Farmer.

your eyes would devour the

BURLY.

SAILOR.

CHANNEL. (Aside.) I'm glad

RACHEL HEYWOOD.

he has got it, for all that, you saved my daughter from a scoundrel, and

POLLY BRIGGS.

CLARINA. Nay, he did not best promise it, when he married me?

Tenants, Children, Villagers, &c., &c.

CHANNEL. Said like a good wife, and therefore prettily said. So, Basil, as you're my son, why die an admiral, and I shall be satisfied.

TIME—about 179—.

POLLY. And now, we're all to go to England!

CHANNEL. Not all. Though the list's a long one, many stay behind. (Gives the list to FORREST, the Prisoners eagerly group round him and read.) Therefore, let not those set free, fail in their best wishes for—THE PRISONER OF WAR.

THE END.

THE RENT DAY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in Grantley Hall.

CRUMBS, BEANSTALK, Farmers, *their Wives and Children*, Servants, &c. *The Characters and Stage so arranged as to form, on the rising of the Curtain, a representation of Wilkie's Picture of "RENT DAY."*

CRUMBS. By my heart, there's nought so pleasant as a rent-day!

BEANSTALK. Thee be'st right, master Crumbs; nought — when the corn's in the barn, and the money in the bag; but rent-day, wi' bad crops and low pockets, be an awful thing.

FIRST FARMER. It be, indeed. See what it ha' brought Phil Jones to. That seizure, master Crumbs, ha' broke his heart. Warn't you a bit hasty like?

CRUMBS. Ha, friends, it's a sad task to be steward; I often seize with tears in my eyes. What then? we must keep a clear book. I never turn out a family but — (*to one of the Farmers*) — you don't drink your ale, master Stoke — with the greatest reluctance. Last week, when Miles and his children went to the work-house, it — (*to another Farmer*) — help your dame to some pie — it made me really uneasy. Yet one's feelings must suffer. One must keep a clear book.

BEANSTALK. Where be Martin Heywood, I wonder? Ha! things ha' ne'er gone right since the old man died of a sudden. I had hopes to see Martin here.

CRUMBS. I've had hopes some time past. (*Crosses to table, and takes a glass.*) But here's a toast; (*fills a glass*) here's punctuality to all tenants. (*They drink — looking significantly at each other.*)

BEANSTALK. Come, I'll gi' thee another. Here be mercy and liberality to all landlords!

ALL (*except CRUMBS*). Well said! Mercy to all landlords! (*drinking.*)

BEANSTALK (*to CRUMBS*). Why, master Crumbs, be there a spider in the glass? — thee dost not drink. Come, "mercy," man! There be few on us, I fear, would be worse for a little more on't. (*CRUMBS sips and puts down the glass.*) Tak' another sup.

CRUMBS. No more. (*Crosses to another table.*) There, master Beanstalk, is your receipt; there, friend Thomas (*giving various papers to Farmers*), is yours. As for that matter about the tithes, master Hodge, we must talk on't. All our business is now despatched, and I'll drain another glass to our next merry meeting. (*He goes to the first table again. All rise, having filled glasses.*)

BEANSTALK. Stay; I'll clap a tail to that toast; so drink good fortune to master Heywood!"

ALL. Ay, ay!

BEANSTALK. Stop! And his wife, Rachael—Not yet!—and all his darling little babes, God bless 'em! (*All drink.*) Why, master Crumbs, what makes thee look so blank? It be a bad sign if a man make wry faces when he hears luck wished to another.

CRUMBS. Wry faces! you mistake. But you take a good deal of interest in Martin Heywood.

BEANSTALK. Naturally. I ha' known him ever since he could ha' lain in my hat. My dame, here, stood for his wife, Rachel, and a blessed little blossom she was. If it hadn't been for bad times,—but I won't brag. (*Retires amongst Farmers. Second Farmer comes down to CRUMBS.*)

SECOND FARMER. Now good master steward, you'll give me time, I hope?

CRUMBS. Time isn't in my gift if I would.

SECOND FARMER. I have a wife and eight children.

CRUMBS. A marvellous pity; but I must make up my book.

SECOND FARMER. Give me but two months.

CRUMBS. You shall have two weeks. Don't reckon on an hour more. Two weeks, and then I sell every stick.

SECOND FARMER. Have you no heart?

CRUMBS. I must make up my book!—Two weeks. (Farmer retires. BEANSTALK, who, with others, has filled his glass, comes down, and forces a glass on CRUMBS.)

BEANSTALK. I say, master Crumbs, the old toast at parting. "Here 's mercy to all landlords."

CRUMBS (*unwillingly drinking*). "Mercy — landlords!" —Farewell, farewell!—(*Exeunt Farmers.*) They 're gone; now to sort the money. (*Employs himself sorting papers, notes, &c., and putting them into the box.*) Heywood must pack. The farm must come into my hands. Let me reckon. Another twelvemonth,—the landlord still away, and my fortune is complete. I have scraped, and scratched, and wrung!—'T is very well. Such another year, and farewell England. (*Locking box at table.*)

SILVER JACK and HYSSOP are seen looking in.

JACK (*pointing out CRUMBS to HYSSOP*). 'T is he! I'll swear it!

CRUMBS. Who 's there? (JACK and HYSSOP disappear.)

Enter STEPHEN with letters.

Is it you, Stephen?—talking to yourself?

STEPHEN. Talking, Sir? not I. Here be letters; this, from London; it has our master's crest. (*Retires.*)

CRUMBS. Master! Humph! (*Opens and reads.*) 'T is from young Spendthrift. The old style; more money. He shall have it.

TOBY HEYWOOD, *without*.

TOBY. No, no; I'll walk in. When he sees me he'll be sure I'm here.

Enters from back.

Servant, Master Crumbs.

CRUMBS. Servant! I'd hoped to see your brother, Martin. (*To STEPHEN half aside.*) Stephen, go to Bullfrog. Tell him to come to me to-night; I shall have business for him. Ay, and call on Burly, too, and tell him the same. [*Exit STEPHEN.*]

TOBY. Bullfrog and Burly! What devil's feast's afoot, that they must have a spoon in?

CRUMBS. All trades must be filled; Bullfrog's is an ugly one.

TOBY. Ay; but the ugliest trades have their moments of pleasure. Now, if I were a grave-digger, or even a hangman, there are some people (*glancing at CRUMBS*) I could work for with a great deal of enjoyment.

CRUMBS. That's a Bullfrog's maxim; he's very merry.

TOBY. The most jovial of brokers and appraisers. He levies a distress as though he brought a card of invitation; giggles himself into possession; makes out the inventory with a chuckle; and carts off chairs and tables to "Be-gone dull care," or "How merrily we live who shepherds be."

CRUMBS. True, in these matters he has a coolness.

TOBY. Coolness! he'd eat oysters whilst his neighbour's house was in flames,—always provided that his own was insured. Coolness! he's a piece of marble, carved into a broad grin!

CRUMBS. Well, well, your business with me?

TOBY. My brother, Martin, has been once more disappointed.

CRUMBS. So have I.

TOBY. That's lucky. You'll be better able to feel for him.

CRUMBS. I want money.

TOBY. So does he.

CRUMBS. I'll give time, if there be any one to answer for him. Can't you assist him? have you nothing?

TOBY. Yes; fifteen pounds a year, as principal usher to the town free-school. My goods and chattels are a volume of "Robinson Crusoe," ditto "Pilgrim's Progress," with "Plutarch's Morals," much like the morals of many other people,—a good deal dog's-eared! If my uncle had made me a ploughman instead of a mongrel scholar, I might have had a mouldy guinea or so.

CRUMBS. But has your brother no one to speak for him?

TOBY. Yes. There are two.

CRUMBS. Where shall I find them?

TOBY. In the church-yard. His grandfather and his father lie there. Go to the graves of the old men and these are the words the dead will say to you: "We lived sixty years in Holly Farm. In all that time we never begged an hour of the 'Squire. We paid rent, tax, and tithe; we earned our bread with our own hands, and owed no man a penny when laid down here. Well, then, will ye be hard on young Heywood; will ye press upon our child, our poor Martin, when murrain has come upon his cattle, and blight fallen upon his corn?" This is what the

dead will say. I should like to know what the living has to answer?

CRUMBS (*handing over the Squire's letter*). This.

TOBY (*opening it*). From the young 'Squire. (*Reads.*) "Master Crumbs, use all despatch, and send me, on receipt of this, £500. Cards have tricked me, and the devil coggled the dice. Get the money at all costs, and quickly. ROBERT GRANTLEY." Ay, a right true letter from an absent landlord.

CRUMBS. 'Tis hard to be steward to a wild youth who looks not after his own estate. You see, he leaves me no discretion?

TOBY. Oh, no. If the landlord lose at gaming, his tenants must suffer for 't. The 'Squire plays a low card,—issue a distress-warrant! He throws deuce-ace,—turn a family into the fields! 'Tis only awkward to lose hundreds on a card; but very rascally to be behind-hand with one's rent!

CRUMBS. As you say—very true. Good morning, master Toby. (*Going.*)

TOBY. Good morning. Poor brother Martin would n't come himself, so I thought I'd step up and speak to you. But I'll tell him that you'll give him all time, and that he's not to make himself uneasy. and all that. I'll comfort him, depend on 't. And, I say, when you write back to the 'Squire, you can tell him, by way of postscript, if he must feed the gaming-table, not to let it be with money wrung like blood from the wretched. Just tell him, whilst he shuffles the cards, to remember the aching hearts of his distressed tenants. And when he'd rattle the dice, let him stop and think of the knuckles of the bailiff and the tax-gatherer, knocking at the cottage doors of the poor. Good morning, Mr. Steward, good morning.

[*Exit.*

CRUMBS. Now to give my instructions to the beadle and appraiser, and out he goes.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.

A Rustic View.

Enter HYSSOP *and* JACK.

HYSSOP (*to* JACK, *who is looking back*). Come, come, why do you loiter?

JACK. Don't you see that woman still at the style?—the prettiest creature I've looked on this many a day.

HYSSOP. Tush! now we're on business. Go on with your story. Let me see, where did that wench's black eyes interrupt us? Oh! you were about to tell me how you knew that this steward, Crumbs, as he is called, was your master, when you took to live by your wits and the nimbleness of your five fingers. Now, are you sure you know him?

JACK. Do I know my own hand? Thirty years ago, when but a boy, I ran away from my apprenticeship—

HYSSOP. Ay, of rope-making: a fatal profession. Go on.

JACK. Pshaw! I fell in with John Harris—for that's his real name—in London. He was a knight of the road of the first order; kept as pretty a blood, and shuffled a card better than any baronet of St. James's. Bless you! he gave the fashion to Hounslow and Finchley. Well, Newgate hath clipped many a brave fellow's wing! Captain Harris was taken, tried, and condemned for Tyburn.

HYSSOP. Then he got a reprieve?

JACK. Yes, in the way of some files sent to him in a pigeon-pie, and twenty fathom of cord, baked in a few loaves. He gave them the slip and started for the Indies. There, I heard, he met with an Englishman, was brought back again, and here he is. Have you a mind to earn fifty pounds?

HYSSOP. If 't may be done with the leisure of a gentleman.

JACK. 'T is but to open your mouth. See! (*Takes out a seal-skin tobacco-pouch, and from it an old hand-bill. Gives it to Hyssop.*) I have worn it about me for many a long day.

HYSSOP (*reading bill*). "Fifty pounds reward! Escaped from Newgate! John Harris, a convict. He is five feet ten, of a darkish complexion; oval face, quick black eyes with an eager look: his mouth large and restless; his hair a deep chesnut brown, in close curls. His voice is full and his manner of speaking rapid. His pace short and hurried. Has a scar over the left eye; also a scar on the back of the left hand." This can never be the picture of that old man.

JACK. Why, 't is seven-and-twenty years since he sat for it: that's some time for one who hasn't walked upon velvet. Why, even *I* am changed. I can remember when my mother used to call me her "lovely little Jack." As for Harris, 't would have done you good to hear him cry "Stand!"—it came sharp upon you like the click of a

trigger. Step aside, Hyssop, here are two of the natives.
(*They retire amongst the trees.*)

Enter POLLY BRIGGS, BULLFROG following her.

POLLY. Now, Mr. Bullfrog, don't tease me.

BULLFROG. I tease! I should like to know how a man with a freehold of twenty pounds per year, a pretty business, and a genteel figure, could tease, even if he would? It's only poor people who tease; we monied men delight!

POLLY. Well, I'm very poor, Mr. Bullfrog.

BULLFROG. You are: it's your own fault.

POLLY. Fault! poverty's no crime.

BULLFROG. Isn't it? well, it's so like I don't know the difference. It's a pity poor girls have pretty faces; they lead us prudent capitalists into many false reckonings. Oh Polly! if I should love you!

POLLY. La! what should you see to love in me?

BULLFROG. See! why, there's a beautiful face with its streaks of red, and the blue veins running up and down the white skin, for all the world like the ruled pages of a new ledger!

POLLY. White skin! Wouldn't you be better pleased if it were yellow?

BULLFROG. La! why?

POLLY. 'T would remind you of your guineas, you know. And, I'm sure, you love nothing so well.

BULLFROG. Yes, one thing—almost: that pretty little red mouth! Oh, Polly! if you had but a small annuity, or expectations from a sick aunt, or anything of that kind, you'd be a perfect woman.—But I must have a kiss.

POLLY. A kiss! I never heard of such a thing.

BULLFROG. What an ignorant young woman you must be. A kiss is—

BULLFROG is approaching POLLY when TOBY enters and comes down between them.

TOBY. She knows. I taught her long ago. And harkye, Master Bullfrog!

BULLFROG. Now be cool. I'm always cool.

TOBY. You'll still be meddling. Don't you remember that you were *once* kicked?

BULLFROG. Yes. And wasn't I a picture of patience? Did I fly into a rage? No: I flung myself upon the laws. I made twenty pounds by that job, and that didn't make me conceited either.

TOBY. Take care, or I may kick too!

BULLFROG. No. Prudence won't let you.

TOBY. Why not?

BULLFROG. You can't afford to pay for luxuries!

TOBY. Oh! on such an occasion, I'd not mind running in debt. But, Polly, go to the Farm; run and comfort Rachael. Leave the appraiser to me. Go.

[Exit POLLY.
What! waste your valuable time with a girl not worth a groat?

BULLFROG. That's true. And I ought to be down at Brown's, the millwright's.

TOBY. Ha! no use going there. I'm told they barricade doors and windows. You'll never get in there.

BULLFROG. Ha! ha! You don't know my wit. I took possession this morning.

TOBY. Why, how?

BULLFROG. Such a scheme! About an hour after Brown had let himself out of the window, I got a little girl to go and knock at the door, and call for Mrs. Brown. I taught her her lesson; this was it: "Mrs. Brown, for Heaven's sake!"—I made her say "Heaven," because it sounded more real.

TOBY. Yes, Heaven is a good word to lie under.

BULLFROG. Bless you! I've found it so. "For Heaven's sake, come to your husband; he's chopped his leg clean through with an axe!" You should have heard Mrs. Brown scream. Out she ran, wringing her hands,—her three children tumbling after her; and in I and the beadle walked.

TOBY. Then 't was all a lie?

BULLFROG. Lord love you, only my wit. And so I told Mrs. Brown; and bade her wipe her eyes, and make herself comfortable whilst I took down the goods. I shall sell on Thursday.

TOBY. Sell! You are throwing away your time knocking down tea-cups and wooden dishes. You should go to the slave-states and sell the Blacks.

BULLFROG. I certainly do pass off an article with a flourish.

TOBY. Flourish! how capitally you'd dispose of a man, his wife, and six children!

BULLFROG. I'm not conceited; but I think I should. Hem! "Ladies and gentlemen, the next lot consists of eight mortals. Stop, (to TOBY) are Blacks mortals?"

TOBY. Why, with some, it's a matter of doubt, so let them have the benefit of it.

BULLFROG. "Eight mortals. How much shall we say for the lot?"

TOBY. Or you might ask,—"How much for the man? a strong-bodied labourer, a virtuous husband, and an affectionate father. He weighs fourteen stone, has n't a single vice, stands five feet eleven, is very handsome, and is going at only a handful of dollars?"

BULLFROG. Must you talk about affection and all that?

TOBY. Of course. Virtue is especially marketable under the hammer. It's worth while being a constant husband and a doating parent; for one sells for a few dollars extra. Go to America by all means.

BULLFROG. I think I should succeed.

TOBY. Succeed! After your story to Mrs. Brown, if your own father were going by auction, you'd knock him down with the greatest grace in life.

BULLFROG. Now, you flatter!

TOBY. Impossible. With you, there's no improving upon truth.

BULLFROG. Well, that's really handsome. But I—

Enter CRUMBS.

Good day, master Crumbs. I was coming, by your order, about—

CRUMBS. In good time. (*Seeing TOBY.*) He here!

TOBY. Don't let me interrupt business. I'm going to the farm. Good bye, Bullfrog; and, I say, if, in the course of auction matters you've a lot of humanity to dispose of—

BULLFROG. Well?

TOBY. Think of Mrs. Brown, and buy it in for yourself! [*Exit.*]

CRUMBS. A subtle, sneering rogue, that. Harkye, Bullfrog, you must this day seize on Heywood's goods. (*SILVER JACK and HYSSOP come down.*) Strangers here!

JACK (*slapping CRUMBS on the back*). Your servant, old sir!

CRUMBS. Old sir!

JACK. Ay. There's no shame in grey hairs, is there? even though they once were a chesnut-brown. (*Sarcastically.*) What then? hair will change.

HYSSOP. Yes, and quick black eyes, with an eager look, will grow dim and dull.

JACK. A deep voice will lose something of its music; and five feet ten shrink into (*measuring CRUMBS with his eye*) five feet seven or eight.

HYSSOP. A large and restless mouth *may* last.

JACK. Ay, and scars (*seizing the hand of CRUMBS, who stands amazed and trembling*). Yes, scars will not rub out!

CRUMBS. Villains! robbers! (*Passionately*.)

BULLFROG. Robbers! shall I call a constable?

CRUMBS. Peace! away! (*Is hurrying off: JACK meets him.*)

JACK. Nay, nay, old gentleman; we are strangers, and ask a day's hospitality at the mansion.

CRUMBS (*still terrified and endeavouring to escape*). Away—away!

JACK (*holding him*). As you will not give us house-room, will you tell me where I may find a printer?—I wish to distribute through the village some hundred copies of this little bill. (*Shows CRUMBS the hand-bill; he staggers back confounded.*)

BULLFROG. A printer! My cousin Hairspace is the man. Does all my catalogues. Give me the bill. (*Is about to take the bill.*)

CRUMBS. Touch it not; touch it not, I say! Come, gentlemen! (*Inviting them on.*)

JACK. Nay, we will not trouble you. (*To BULLFROG.*) Your cousin, you say?—

BULLFROG. The best printer forty miles about. In black, blue, or red ink, plain or ornamental,—there is no printer who—(*Endavouring to get the bill.*)

CRUMBS. The devil seize thee,—peace!—Come, gentlemen; nay, you must with me to the mansion. We will have a brave dinner! Some wine! wine! I do entreat you not to stay, my good friends.—(*Anxiously endeavouring to lead JACK and HYSSOP off.*)

JACK. As you're so pressing;—but we shall trouble you.

CRUMBS. No, no; it gladdens me that I have met you. Come.

BULLFROG (*who creeps round to JACK and gives him a card*). My cousin's card.

CRUMBS (*crossing to BULLFROG*). What dost mutter?

BULLFROG. Mutter! La! Mr. Crumbs! I only presented Timothy's card. Must always think of trade, you know.

CRUMBS (*with extreme passion*). Think of trade! wouldst see me hanged?

BULLFROG. No. I never neglect business for pleasure.

CRUMBS. Beware! beware! and follow me! (*To JACK*)

and HYSSOP.) Come, gentlemen; come, my good friends! Nay, you first; I entreat.

[*Exit CRUMBS, bowing off JACK and HYSSOP, who exchange looks.*]

BULLFROG. Beware—beware—to a freeholder! I'll—no—I'm not yet rich enough to be in a passion. When I've made my fortune, then I may indulge in the feelings of a gentleman. [*Exit.*]

SCENE III.

A Rustic Landscape.—Evening.

RACHEL *discovered, seated on the projecting step of a stile at the side.*

RACHEL. The sun is almost set, and yet I see not Martin. Oh! my dear husband! my poor children! heaven be kind to us,—for I've almost lost all other hope.—Ha! Martin! Martin!

MARTIN HEYWOOD *appears at the stile:—crosses it.*

MARTIN. Rachel here!—Why did you leave the farm?

RACHEL. I could not stay there and you away. Our children, Martin, they cried for you. I could not speak to them; I could not stay. Now Martin, your friend?

MARTIN (*with bitterness*). Friend!

RACHEL. Oh! do not look so—do not.

MARTIN. I have done that to-day I never did before; I have wished myself dead! ay, dead! that I might be quit of all.

RACHEL. And our children, Martin?

MARTIN. 'T would be better for 'em. There's some spell upon me! Do what I will it does not thrive! Why, 't is certain there's some curse upon me.

RACHEL. Be patient, dear Martin!

MARTIN. Patient! I have been patient. Harvest after harvest's failed;—flock after flock has died; yet have I smiled upon 't, and gone whistling 'bout the fields. I have been hunted by landlord—threatened by the taxman—yet I've put a stout heart upon 't, and never drooped. Rachel Heywood, you see me now without a shilling—without a home—my children with not a week's food before them—my wife starving—and yet I'm patient.

RACHEL. I never saw you so till now. Martin, what has happened?

MARTIN. I may sit down and see my little ones pine day by day; I may feel their wasting limbs, and hear them scream for bread; and I may stare in their white faces, and tell them to be patient. Patient!

RACHEL. Look not so fiercely at me, Martin. Are they not my children—mine? Am I not their mother? Can your love be more than mine? But no; you did not mean that. Come, Martin, be not so hasty. What has happened?

MARTIN. No matter; let it rest with me.

RACHEL. But it must not, Martin. How many a time have you said that you could have no secret from Rachel?

MARTIN. I don't remember that.

RACHEL. Look there, Martin. (*Pointing to the stile.*)—How often have we met at yonder stile; how often have we waited there for hours, and talked of our wedding-day and all our hopes?—then you have said—

MARTIN. Ay, those were gay days! Then life seemed full of promise, as a field of ripened corn. Those were happy times!

RACHEL. They will come back, never fear it. Now tell me, Martin, have you been to your friend?

MARTIN. I have been to Harry Wilson. The same Harry Wilson to whom my grandfather lent good guineas to begin the world.

RACHEL. You asked him to lend you the money for a time?

MARTIN. I stammered it out somehow.

RACHEL. And did he?

MARTIN. Damn him!

RACHEL. Oh, Martin!

MARTIN. I thought I was talking to a brother. I told him all Rachel, all!—And he heard me, with a smile on his face, and said he was sorry!

RACHEL. Then he could not assist us?

MARTIN. No. His money was laid out in ventures,—he had lost by lending;—but he was very sorry!

RACHEL. And he offered nothing?

MARTIN. When I told him we had not a guinea,—not a home that we could call ours, not a certain meal,—the tears came into my eyes, and I felt like a thief whilst I said all this—well, he would n't lend me a far-thing: but, kind soul! he bade me take a glass of wine, and hope for better days! I took the wine, and pouring it upon the floor, wished that my blood might be so

poured out from my heart if ever again I stood beneath his roof! and so I left him!

RACHEL. And your other friend?

MARTIN. No: I asked no other. One denial was enough.

RACHEL. Then every hope is gone!

MARTIN. No; there is one hope yet. And yet I cannot bear to think of it. Rachel, our children must not starve. What say you, shall we cross the sea?

RACHEL. What! leave the farm?

MARTIN. I am offered a place on an estate, far away in the Indies. What say you?

RACHEL. Leave this place?

MARTIN. Why not? We shall find sun and sky and green fields there.

RACHEL. But not our own fields, not our own sky, not the friends who love us, not the neighbours who respect us. Oh! think not of it. Our children, they would die there! Die among strangers! Martin, would you quit our home?

MARTIN. Our home! where is it?—the workhouse! Ha! ha!—Our home! Rachel, it shall be. We'll not be pointed at as beggars. We'll be no burden to the parish. We'll take our children in our arms and leave this place for ever—

Enter TOBY HEYWOOD.

TOBY. Leave this place! what for, Martin? have you got scent of a gold mine?

RACHEL. Oh, speak to him—persuade him! He would go from here—go, and die in some foreign place!

TOBY. Nay, he has more wisdom than that. Thou'rt not such a fool, Martin. Come, I'll give you better advice.

MARTIN. Spare it for those who ask it: I want none.

TOBY. Come, don't snub your younger brother. If you did enter the world ten months and a few seconds before me, you can hear reason. Go to foreign parts, eh?

MARTIN. Shall I stay here and starve?

TOBY. Come, Martin, we never looked sulkily at one another when we were boys; now, 't would be too late to begin: we should make no hand of it. Starve!

MARTIN. Ay. Will not the steward seize?

TOBY. No, no. I have been and talked to him.

MARTIN. You didn't beg for?—

TOBY. Beg! There's little of the beggar in my face. I talked reason to him. I said, a man who had n't money,

couldn't well pay any. All you wanted was time; and he did n't refuse.

RACHEL. There, Martin; I told you not to be cast down. I knew we should yet be happy.

MARTIN. Still there is no certainty that——

TOBY. I tell you what, brother; you are one of those people who are so very fond of ill-luck, that they run halfway to meet it. Old Crumbs will give you time—I know it. Go, Rachel; go to the farm. Wipe your eyes, kiss the babies, take down the bacon, draw a mug of nut-brown, and Martin and I will find appetites. There, away with you.

RACHEL. You will follow, Martin? There, look light again. That's well. We shall once more be happy—very happy! Fortune will change, be sure of it. [*Exit.*]

TOBY. Change! to be sure she will. Fortune's a woman! Hang it, Martin, do muster up a laugh. There, now, practice that fifty times a-day, and Care would as soon be hanged as dare to look at you!

[*TOBY, clapping MARTIN on the shoulder, gradually rouses him into cheerfulness, and exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

The old Oak Room in GRANTLEY'S Mansion. The Panels elaborately carved, in the antique style. In one of the compartments, a Picture of a young Female, richly habited.

Enter GRANTLEY, shown in by BULLFROG, who is slightly intoxicated.

BULLFROG. Master Crumbs will be with you, Sir, in the knocking-down of a hammer. From London, Sir?

GRANTLEY. I am. A fine old mansion this.

BULLFROG. Beautiful! Capital piece of oak-tree paneling that: nice bold carving, Sir. (*Pointing to figures.*) Pretty cherubim's heads in the corners. That's a figure of Mercy. Should like to have the selling of the house and furniture.

GRANTLEY. The owner is indebted to your good wishes.

BULLFROG. The owner! Oh! he's a wild fellow. He's never among us. No, Sir; he's a London spark. His father left him abroad; and, though the old man's been dead,

and the young gentleman's been in England these two years, he has never paid us a visit.

GRANTLEY. Fond of a town life, I suppose?

BULLFROG. Very fond. And then he's so lucky in his steward.

GRANTLEY. Indeed!

BULLFROG. Oh! he's a jewel of a man!—so punctual with the tenants. There's no keeping a guinea from him, Sir. He's a delightful man for our business.

GRANTLEY.—And your profession is —

BULLFROG (*giving card*). Appraiser and auctioneer. Happy to serve you. I made one seizure this morning, shall make another to-night. If you've thoughts of staying amongst us, and want to furnish, I can assist you to two or three good penn'orths. (GRANTLEY *has been observing the picture*.) What, Sir! you are looking at that picture? I don't know the painter. It's not a——

GRANTLEY. No—(*Musing*.)

BULLFROG. No. And it's not by—by—(*aside*)—I must get an Italian smatter, or I shall never be able to knock down the painters!

GRANTLEY. Is it a family portrait?

BULLFROG. Why, Sir, between ourselves, if I were to put it up for auction, I should call it a conundrum in an oak frame!

GRANTLEY. Why so?

BULLFROG. Why, more than twice I've caught Mr. Crumbs standing before it looking at it; and once (you'll hardly believe it, for nobody who knows him would), I caught him with the tears rolling down his cheeks. Nobody would believe it!

GRANTLEY. Then he's not generally given to strong emotion?

BULLFROG. Bless you! no, Sir. He's too much a man of business for that. Here he comes. Not a word.

Enter CRUMBS.

CRUMBS. Your servant, Sir. Business must excuse me that I made you wait. (*To BULLFROG*.) Go you and see that Burly is at hand. I seize within this hour. Go!

BULLFROG. I will;—(*aside*)—but first for the other bottle with Captain Jack. I must better my taste in wines, if only in the way of trade. [*Exit.*

GRANTLEY. I shall tax your hospitality for some days. This (*giving a letter*) from my friend, Grantley.

CRUMBS. He's well, I trust? (*Aside*.) Curses on it. (*Reads*.) "The bearer is my most special friend: treat him

with all respect as he were myself. He will stay to sport some week or two." I would, Sir, we had had earlier notice. I fear me you will find us ill-provided.

GRANTLEY. Never fear it.

CRUMBS. In truth, Sir, 't is a dull spot. Here we see no one—hear no one.

GRANTLEY. Indeed it seems still enough.

CRUMBS. You never hear a sound—not a sound; unless it be the birds in the rookery, or, at night, a mouse scratching in the wall. (*Loud laughing and knocking within.* SILVER JACK *sings, in a loud voice:*)

"May corn never fail, for that makes good ale;
But a blight to all hempseed, brave boys, brave boys,
But a blight to all hempseed, brave boys!—

(*Laughing and noise.*)

GRANTLEY. Do the mice scratch thus early?

CRUMBS (*confused*). I—I—(*laughing and noise continued*).

GRANTLEY. The rooks are somewhat jovial.

CRUMBS. It hath never happened until now. They are the richest of the 'Squire's tenants—devout religious men; but to-day being rent day—

JACK and HYSSOP are heard at the door.

Holloa, Master Crumbs.

CRUMBS. I come—I—(*To GRANTLEY.*) Men of worth and reputation.

JACK. Master Crumbs! John Harris! Fifty pounds reward!

CRUMBS. Damnation!

[GRANTLEY crosses to left; CRUMBS in extreme terror rushes up and opens folding doors in scene. SILVER JACK and HYSSOP are seen, with BULLFROG trying to keep them back. They come down, all flushed with wine, JACK holding a bottle.

CRUMBS (*aside to them*). I am busy. I will return. Go.

JACK. Busy! Damn business!

BULLFROG. No: don't damn business. I'm very drunk, but I can't damn business: it's profane.

JACK. To leave your company, and—(*Seeing GRANTLEY.*) Oh! a gentleman! Introduce us. You won't? no?—I'll introduce myself—

[*Puts bottle upon the stage, which BULLFROG takes up, and retires to back; seats himself in chair, and during the following, drinks till he falls asleep.*

Servant, Sir. Nice house this. Capital wine; yes, and a civil steward.—Sir, I beg your friendship. If you're for any thing in this way, I——

[*Taking from his pocket a pack of cards, and shuffling them.*]

HYSSOP. Ay, Sir; or if there be music in this——
[*Rattling a dice box.*]

GRANTLEY (*aside*). Devout, religious men!

JACK. We're not avaricious. We play for anything, from a maravedi to a thousand guineas.

CRUMBS (*who has been vainly endeavouring to keep them back*). No, no; the gentleman does not play. Go in, my good friends.

GRANTLEY (*to CRUMBS*). With your leave, I'll look about the grounds.

JACK. Fine spot, nice house, good wine—ay, and (*looking at portrait*) pretty pictures! Well, I say, (*to HYSSOP*) isn't that an angel?

HYSSOP. I can't say: I've not been used to such company.

GRANTLEY. It is, indeed, beautiful. (*To CRUMBS.*) Tell me, whose portrait is it? Did you know the lady?

CRUMBS (*with suppressed emotion*). She was a—a favourite of the late Squire's. She's long since dead.

JACK. A favourite and dead! Ha! I suppose the 'Squire was fond of her, and so broke her heart.

CRUMBS (*with passion*). How dare you—

JACK (*coolly and in an under tone*). Come, come, John Harris; fifty pounds reward!

CRUMBS (*recovering himself, to GRANTLEY*). Come, Sir, I will show you——

GRANTLEY. Do not quit your friends. With your leave, I'll go alone. Gentlemen, I am the humblest of your servants. (*Aside.*) Devout, religious men! [*Exit.*]

HYSSOP. A pretty spoken fellow.

JACK. And a rich one. Did you see the diamonds on his fingers? I warrant me his pockets are—umph! a prize? (*To CRUMBS.*) What say you?

CRUMBS. I— I?——

JACK. I'd forgot. You only rob now as a steward. You're one of the regulars.

CRUMBS. Rob! harkye!—

JACK. Come, come, John Harris; no big words. I've something here, (*showing the bill*) wouldn't look so well framed as that red-lipped young lady.

[*Pointing to picture.*]

CRUMBS. Well, well, we're friends; but be cautious, I implore you. (*In great agitation.*) Come, you shall have more wine, wine! [*Goes up and opens the door.*]

JACK. Wine! Ay, we will have more. And then, for our plans, old boy; then for our plans. Why, how lucky it was that we met one another! You see there were a few pressing inquiries about us in London, so we thought we'd take the benefit of country air, until the anxiety of our friends cooled a little. But then to think of the luck of our meeting! Ar'n't you delighted? [*Embracing him.*]

CRUMBS. Yes, yes. But go in. You shall have wine. I'll go see to it.

JACK. Wine, wine! Ha! ha! We drink courage with wine. Success to the grapes—(*sings.*)

"But a blight to all hempseed, brave boys, brave boys,
A blight to all hempseed, brave boys!"

CRUMBS forces JACK and HYSSOP into room in scene.

CRUMBS. The devil has forsaken me! To be tracked out after so many years! This visitor, too! No, my course is clear. But how to dispose of that ruffian? Ha! he has been prating of some woman;—by the description 't is Heywood's wife.—I'll put him in possession of the farm, and thus rid me of whilst I—let me see—

BULLFROG (*still asleep*). What shall we say for this wine, fifty years in bottle? Thank'e, Sir; it's going,—going,—gone. (*Lets the bottle fall out of his hand.*)

CRUMBS (*who has remained in a state of deep thought startled, rushes up to BULLFROG, and seizes him*). Scoundrel! Listening!

BULLFROG. Dreaming—only dreaming. I just knocked down the sweetest ten dozen!

CRUMBS. Up, or I strangle you! Is't thus you mind your business?

BULLFROG. Business?—that's enough. Cry business!—and if I don't move, you may send for the undertaker.

CRUMBS. Hence!

BULLFROG. I'm going. Business is business. Capital wine. (*Sings.*)

"And a blight to all hempseed," &c., &c.

CRUMBS. Hence! hence!— [*Forces him off.*]

BULLFROG. Going,—going,—gone.

SCENE V.

The Interior of HEYWOOD'S Farm. The Scene, Furniture, &c., as in WILKIE'S Picture of "Distraining for Rent."

MARTIN and RACHEL seated at Table, with TOBY, BEANSTALK, his Dame, and the Children. Ale Jugs, &c., on the Table.

BEANSTALK. Come, Martin, here be better times.— So: we shall be jovial yet, man.

RACHEL. Ay, that we shall; and so I tell him, farmer; but he will not heed me.

MARTIN. We have had nought but ill-luck since the old man died.

BEANSTALK. Why, 't was awfully sudden, to be sure.

MARTIN. Here he was one minute, as strong and as lightsome as ever; when death fell upon him like a bolt, and he lay upon that bed, panting like a run-down hare.

TOBY. Odds, Martin! look into your ale; you'll see something better than dying men. Our grandfather's in heaven. Here's to the memory of him! Let him rest.

MARTIN. I tell you I can't but think of him. Abroad or at home I see him. Sometimes, when I'm falling into sleep, his eyes seem to stare close my face, and I start and gasp again; and then I see him looking and pointing at that chair. (*To Farmer.*) You know, farmer, he'd sit in it for hours, with one of the youngsters on his knee.— Still I see him with his hand stretched forth, and his throat working, as though the words were there, but could n't out;—and so he died. Depend on 't, there was something on the old man's mind.

TOBY. Brother, shall I go to the churchyard and bring you a skull and cross bones? for, in your present humour, they're your fittest company.

MARTIN. I'm a fool to think so. (*Fills horn.*) Come, farmer, your hand; Toby, yours; Rachel, lass, we'll be merry yet. Here's to better times.

[*Drinks, then takes two of the children upon his knees.*]

TOBY. Come, I warrant me, there's more comfort in that than in ghosts' eyes at midnight. Why, it's up in your cheek already, man. Take another.

MARTIN. With all my heart. And again I'll drink "here's to better times!"

Enter POLLY BRIGGS.

POLLY. Oh, farmer Heywood! Here comes the steward, and that nasty appraiser, and the beadle, and all the folks say they 're coming here to seize!—

MARTIN (*putting down the children*). Rachel, stand aside! that gun!

[*Is going to take the gun from over the chimney-piece.*]

RACHEL (*preventing him*). Oh, Martin! husband, for the love of heaven!

TOBY. What would you, Martin?

MARTIN. Shoot the first man who crosses yonder threshold. Let me go!

BEANSTALK. Come, come, Martin, be not rash: thee'st no reason to be so.

MARTIN. No reason! You have a wife and children, yet say I have no reason!—Are not here five—(*Pointing to RACHEL and children*)—five bitter reasons? the gun! (*Violently.*)

TOBY. Martin, Martin, are you mad?

MARTIN (*falling despairingly into a chair*). I am mad. God help me!—I am mad!

Enter CRUMBS.

CRUMBS. This is a disagreeable business.

TOBY. I should know that by your looking so pleased.

CRUMBS. I want my due.

TOBY. You 'll have it some day. I wish the law allowed me to give it you now.

BEANSTALK. Come, come, master Crumbs; have compassion.

TOBY. Compassion!—Tell him to have three heads.

RACHEL. Do not anger him. (*To CRUMBS.*) Good Sir, give us time; but a short time: have mercy.—Kneel, children, kneel!

[*Children are about to kneel, when MARTIN starts forward.*]

MARTIN. Stand! if you 're of my blood. They are the children of an honest man, and must not kneel before a villain!

CRUMBS. Mighty well. You owe a twelvemonth's rent; and, instead of money, you give blustering words. Rent-day passes lightly with you.

MARTIN. Lightly! (*To BEANSTALK.*) Farmer, as I am a man, I have lived a whole year in torment. Day has been all misery to me, and bed no bed. Still, as rent-

day would come, I have lain awake whole nights, and every night was more dreadful than the past. Then I've tried to think no more, but dug my head into my pillow and fixed my fingers tightly in my hair, and tried to stun myself to sleep;—but all would not do.—There appeared a something hanging over me—about me;—heavy and stifling it seemed—and my blood would run hot and cold; and so I've lain and watched and prayed the daylight in. The next night worse, for it brought the time still nearer. And when at last the rent-day came, and I without one groat, I've crossed yon door, not with an English Farmer's tread, but with a thief's pace, crawling to the gallows!—This is to pass rent-day lightly!

CRUMBS. Why not give up the farm? Why not leave the house?

MARTIN. Why not? My father's father grew grey under this roof. And sooner should these beams fall and knock my brains out than I would quit them. Here I was born, and here I will die. If you would take me through yon door, master Crumbs, I tell you it must be heels foremost. Leave the house! I almost love it like a living thing.

CRUMBS. All very fine. For my part, I can't see why one house should n't be as good as another.

MARTIN. Likely you cannot. But I have crawled a little child upon this floor: the very door-step is worn with my feet. I have seen my mother, father, die here!—I—I tell you here I first saw the light, and here I'll close my eyes.

RACHEL. Dear Martin, be calm.

CRUMBS. You'll not oppose the law?

MARTIN. I know not that. I tell you don't provoke me. (*Taking the arm chair.*) Here I sit in my grandfather's chair: the chair of that old man, who, for forty years, paid rent and tithe to the last guinea. Here I sit! And I warn you, put not a hand upon a stick or thread.

CRUMBS (*calling at door*). Come in, friends.

Enter BULLFROG and BURLY.

MARTIN. I warn you back.

BURLY (*shewing a paper*). What say you to our warrant, master Heywood?

MARTIN. I tell you not to tempt me. I cannot trust myself, for I am desperate! Leave the farm!

CRUMBS (*to BULLFROG and BURLY*). You know your duties. [*Exit through door.*]

BULLFROG (*who has been looking over goods*). Business is business. (*Takes out pen, ink and book.*) One bedstead!

MARTIN. Let me come at them!

TOBY. Nay, nay, brother!

RACHEL. Husband!

CHILDREN. Father!

[*They all hang about MARTIN, keeping him from attacking BURLY and BULLFROG.*]

MARTIN (*after a struggle sinks into the chair*). Rachel!—my poor babes!—take all, take all!

BULLFROG (*making out the inventory seated on the bed*). One bedstead!—one table!

BEANSTALK and NEIGHBOURS (*who have entered*). Shame! shame!

TOBY. Blood-suckers!

BULLFROG. One toasting-fork, one bird-cage, one baby's rattle.

MARTIN. God help us! God help us!

[*Buries his face in his hands. The other Characters so arrange themselves as to represent WILKIE'S Picture of "DISTRAINING FOR RENT."*]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The Interior of HEYWOOD'S Farm. Day breaking. The Furniture of the Scene as at the conclusion of the First Act.

POLLY BRIGGS *discovered, seated at a Table. A Light burning.*

POLLY. Dear me! how heavily the times goes,—and the farm,—I declare it does n't look as it used to do. I'm so tired—yet I must keep my eyes open for company's sake.

Enter RACHEL.

RACHEL. They sleep soundly. Poor children! Heaven knows where they will rest another night. I stood and

watched them; and they looked so innocent—so happy—they smiled, and my heart died within me.

POLLY. Don't take on so. Martin will return with good news, never fear.

RACHEL. I'm so wretched, I have lost even hope. My pretty babes, had we been always beggars, then you could have borne cold, nipping winds, rough words, uncertain food;—but now, they'll pine, and so they'll die. Even our children will be taken from us.

POLLY. Well, I never thought you could talk after this fashion.

RACHEL. Nor I. But then I had not seen my infants lying on a bed no longer theirs. Is it not almost day-break? Had Martin been successful, he would surely have been back.

POLLY. Now why will you think the worst? I shouldn't wonder if he returned with a large bag of money. I'll go to the end of the lane, and see if either he or Toby be coming.

RACHEL. No, do not leave me—the stranger up-stairs.—Yet go; but do not stay. [*Exit POLLY.* Sure the morning will never come. Oh, yes, 't will come too soon. Then another and another, and we are houseless beggars. I walk about the place like a restless ghost. To know the worst were better than to remain thus. (*Sits down.*) I am worn and tired—even too tired to sleep. (*Fatigued, she falls asleep in chair.*)

Enter SILVER JACK, cautiously.

JACK. All quiet. Harris must have put some devil into that wine, or I had never slept so. Here am I in possession,—a watch-dog over spoons and platters, whilst Hyssop, I warrant me, is rarely plucking that new-comer. Jack, Jack, so it has ever run; a pair of bright eyes has been a will-o'-the-wisp to you, leading you through quagmires all your life. Ha! (*seeing RACHEL*) she's here and sleeping! How tired, pale, yet pretty she seems! She looks good, and—pshaw! we all look good asleep. How still the place is; no one here but ourselves:—yes, the children. I just passed through their room, and saw them looking as fresh and as rosy—I felt as I had n't felt for many a day. 'T was a fool's moment, and is gone. (*Approaching her.*)

RACHEL (*waking*). Martin, Martin! (*Seeing JACK.*) You here!

JACK. I couldn't well sleep, so I thought I'd come

down and keep you company. This is a much pleasanter room.

RACHEL. It is at your service. I can go to my children's. (*Going.*)

JACK (*staying her*). They're all fast asleep. Bless their little hearts! I stood and looked at them just now till I quite loved them. They are very handsome.

RACHEL. And most unfortunate.

JACK. Why this is an awkward business. But you may yet find friends.

RACHEL. Friendship!

JACK. We sometimes find it where we had least thoughts of it. Your children are very like you.

RACHEL. It has been remarked. I—(*Going.*)

JACK (*lingering*). Yes, full purses ought to go with full hearts.

RACHEL. 'T would save much misery. I would your employer—

JACK. My employer! Why, to be sure, old Crumbs was once my master: but times are changed; we are now bosom friends. I am only here to oblige him.

RACHEL. Your task can hardly be a pleasant one.

JACK. Nay, 't is very pleasant. Look you, I have been rolling these many years about the world, and this (*displaying a purse*) has still been gathering. Those pretty babes of yours—I'm mightily taken with them. Where is your husband?

RACHEL. Gone, as a last hope, to try to borrow. He should have been back by this.

JACK. I never found this purse so troublesome before. Will you lighten it for me? Come, no ceremony. You want money: I don't.

RACHEL. Oh! this is kind, most kind. Yet from a stranger—

JACK. Pshaw! ill-fortune, now and then, makes sudden acquaintances. (*Still pressing the money.*)

RACHEL. Indeed, Sir, I—I cannot.

JACK. Yet the poor babes must sleep somewhere tomorrow. Come!

RACHEL. My husband will speedily be here; he, perhaps—

JACK. Nay, when I am in the humour, I would n't be balked. Now, or never. Hang it! take the purse. (*Forces the purse into her hand.*)

RACHEL. My husband will return it with a thousand thanks. My children are saved. Oh! you have made us most happy!

JACK. That's enough for me. As for returning the money, that may rest with yourself. 'T would have been hard for you to see your husband in a jail! yourself and little ones without a home.

RACHEL. Only to hear you name it, makes me tremble.

JACK. But there's no such hard fortune for you. No: you may stay in your farm, have your children about you, whilst all fears of beggary and the workhouse——why, you seem ill?

RACHEL. The sudden joy—'t is nothing, and will pass.

JACK. Come, sit down. (*She sits.*) There, you are looking better whilst I speak. (*Hanging over the chair.*) As for money, if you like to have it as a gift, 't is a bargain between us. So, to make it binding, just one kiss! (*Throwing his arms about her: she shrinks from him—pause.*) Why do you look so at me?

RACHEL. I was deceived! I thought I saw a friend: I was deceived! (*Rising.*)

JACK. Tush! I am your friend. Come, one kiss.

RACHEL. There (*dropping the purse at his feet*) is your money. (*Going.*)

JACK. Will you be blind to your own good? I tell you the money shall be yours—all yours. I care not for a penny of it.

RACHEL. Be silent, and let me go. (*Endeavouring to pass.*)

JACK. Think of your children—your husband—(*Seizes her.*)

RACHEL. I do, and scorn you. (*Breaking from him.*)

JACK. Are you mad?—listen to my offer.

RACHEL. Had you made it when the world went well with us—when this roof sheltered a happy family—when every day brought its plenty, its content—when we had no fear of poverty or persecution—even then, the thought of that you propose should have brought the blushes to your face, and made you dumb with shame;—but now,—with want at our hearth—a husband mad with sorrow—children unprotected—now to offer!—oh! you have a heart of stone, or you could ne'er have thought it.

JACK. Hear reason, and take the purse. I tell you I do not mean——

RACHEL. You mean the worst. He who would destroy a happy fire-side, is vile and infamous; but he who insults its wretchedness, is base indeed.

JACK. Base! Look you!—zounds! to be whipped by

a woman's tongue! Come, don't let us part so. This is all very well, but, but—hang it! can't we understand one another?

RACHEL. Oh! Martin! Martin!

JACK (*chinking the purse*). He may sleep in a prison to-morrow!

RACHEL. Let me pass. I must, will go to my children.

JACK (*throwing up the purse*). And they may want a breakfast.

RACHEL. Villain! though you insult the wife, have pity on the mother (*crosses, he seizes her*)—let me go!

JACK. Not now—I have gone too far.

RACHEL. Oh! you will not! Mercy! Martin! (*despairingly*) he comes not!

JACK (*passionately*). You may rave. You've roused me, and I'll not be trifled with.

RACHEL. Help! help! (*They struggle.*) My husband—he is here!—

[JACK, *surprised, lets her go, and falls back. She rushes to the door, and seizes a wood-cutter's bill that is lying on some wood near the wall.*

JACK (*recoiling*). Tricked!

RACHEL. You see a sound will make a coward of the wicked. Do not come near me! pray do not. This, though you die, shall protect me.

JACK. Well, well, I own I've been wrong. I ask pardon. Come back. Put your trust—

RACHEL. In this! (*Lifting the bill.*) I say again, stir not! stay beneath this roof! stay in the poor man's house you would have outraged! Stay,—blush,—and beg to be forgiven! [*Exit.*

JACK. Gone!—what devil is it that crows me? Ha! (*Looking out.*) She flies down the lane—that copse!—yes, though I ran to the gallows, I would follow her! [*Exit.*

BULLFROG (*putting his head from between the bed curtains*). Run to the gallows!—you needn't hurry yourself; the gallows will wait for you. Well, this I call an adventure. Now, if this cause come to trial, I'm witness ready for either side. As I'm a sworn appraiser, it's almost daylight!—why, I must have been asleep these seven or eight hours, and nobody knew it. This all comes of the steward's wine. Eh! I hear a footstep. I must sleep and listen.

[*Disappears, closing the bed curtains.*

Enter POLLY.

POLLY. Why, Rachel!—oh, gone up-stairs, I suppose, to cry over the poor little things! Well, I've no good news for her. I went all down the lane, and came back over the fields, and saw no signs of Martin or Toby either. If these are the troubles that are to come upon the married, I'm sure a poor girl is better single. There's nothing but vexation in this world!—and, dear me, I'm so sleepy!—I haven't had a single wink all night, and it's a shame, too; for there stood the bed so inviting, as though it said, do come and lie down! There'll be no harm in sitting upon it. (*Sits on the bed.*) How I should like to lie down!

BULLFROG (*putting his head through the curtains*). Well, there's plenty of room for two!

POLLY (*screaming and running into corner*). Thieves! Murder!—

At this instant TOBY appears at the door.

TOBY. Polly!—Bullfrog!

POLLY. Oh, the wretch!

TOBY (*seizing BULLFROG*). What's this?—speak!

BULLFROG. How can I, with your fingers in my wind-pipe?

TOBY (*dragging him out of bed*). Answer me—what is all this?

POLLY. Yes, explain, Mr Bullfrog.

BULLFROG (*half aside to POLLY*). Don't be a fool, and nobody will be the wiser.

POLLY. The wiser, Sir—the wiser?

TOBY. Speak, I say!

BULLFROG (*aside*). Now I'll talk nettles to him. Well, Mr. Heywood, the fact is, I—I am but a man.

TOBY. Why, no—I never took you for an angel.

BULLFROG. Perhaps not, Mr. Heywood; but the fair sex—(*winking to POLLY*) the fair sex can discover modest merit.

POLLY. Now, as I'm alive, I was here alone!—and never knowing that that wretch—

BULLFROG. Fie!—wretch! What, *now!*—call me wretch now?

POLLY. That monster!—

BULLFROG. Come, no scandal. If you will tell the truth, I can't help it; but no scandal.

POLLY. That—that—

BULLFROG. There, don't press her: you see her feelings.

TOBY. Master Bullfrog, you've had a marvellous escape!

BULLFROG. How?

TOBY. In not lighting on as great a fool as yourself; else, my life on 't, your head had been broken.

BULLFROG. A fool! And have you the audacity to call me a fool?

TOBY. And not all fool: for the rogue is so equally mixed, that there's no saying where either begins or ends.

BULLFROG. Fool! Rogue!—The law will tell you this is slander.

TOBY. I know it; I'm speaking the truth.

BULLFROG. And the law shall mend my character.

TOBY. The character that needs law to mend it is hardly worth the tinkering. In one word, how came you here?

POLLY. That's right. Make him tell you.

BULLFROG. Tell! well, you're a courageous woman! What, then, (*to TOBY*) you've no suspicion?—there's no making you unhappy?

TOBY. No.

BULLFROG. Mrs. Heywood will be a fortunate woman.

TOBY. What put you into that bed?

POLLY. Yes, what put you into that bed?

BULLFROG. If you must know, this. (*Producing bottle from his pocket.*) This put me to bed; it's done as much for many a man.

TOBY. What do you mean?

BULLFROG. Mean! Didn't I attend here as sworn appraiser, and didn't I make the inventory? Yes. (*Producing it.*) Here it is; "One cradle, one toasting fork,"—all right; move a stick, and I'll indict you! Well, there was a great noise in the family; one running one way—one another—children crying—women fainting, a smell of burnt feathers! and your brother swearing, enough to shock any Christian who knows what virtue is, and pays his way. I had brought a little wine from the mansion, and all of a sudden, I found myself quite alone here, so I sat down upon the bed, and I drank, and drank. Then I got on the bed, then between the blankets, pulled to the curtains, looked at my inventory—(some of the things will sell well)—said my prayers,—droned a hymn, and went to sleep! Then,—no, I pass over the

rest—when you (*to POLLY*) came in, you—but I mustn't go any further.

TOBY. Yes, you must.

BULLFROG. I tell you I can't.

TOBY. I tell you you must—you must go over that doorstep. If you remain here two minutes longer, 't will not be on your legs, I promise you. (*Menacing him.*)

BULLFROG. I give you warning! Remember, I'm a sworn appraiser.

TOBY. You're the better able to judge for what you ought to be knocked down.—Come, pack!

BULLFROG. I'm going. But only threaten me, and I'll call down the man from up-stairs—he who's in possession.—(*Aside.*) They must n't know he's gone, or they'll block up the premises.

TOBY (*still threatening him*). I've given you fair words.

BULLFROG. Keep to 'em; you can't do better. Ha! drop your arm, or I call for the man. If you put me in bodily fear, it's no fault of mine!—Now, Mr. Toby!—here! my good man—(*shrinking from TOBY, and feigning to call down SILVER JACK*). My good man!

TOBY. Will you go?

BULLFROG. I will, (*aside*) to give Crumbs notice. Ha! I'll call I tell you I'll call. As for that young woman, if you demand any satisfaction—oh, you don't? well, it's very prudent of you. Don't stir a step, or down he comes! And now—now, (*aside*) to put another man in.

[BULLFROG *gets to door, stops, and calls as to man up stairs.*]

My good man, see that they don't move a stick!

[TOBY *runs to door, and BULLFROG makes his escape.*]

POLLY. If you'll believe me, my dear Toby, I never dreamt that that wretch—that villain—that——

TOBY. I'm sure you must be intimate with him by the correctness of your description. Let the fool go. Where's Rachel?

POLLY. With the children. Have you seen nothing of Martin?

TOBY. No. For once I fear the worst. But my mind's made up—I'll go to London.

POLLY. Mercy save us!—to London?

TOBY. To London; though I walk every inch of the way, and live upon blackberries—I'll see the young Squire himself.

POLLY. But why go—why not write?

TOBY. No; a letter's but a scribbled bit of paper, to be tossed aside, and there an end. No; he shall look in my face and hear me talk; and if I don't bring the blood into his cheek, why, there's not a blush to be had from all London.

POLLY. Don't be rash. Do but consider who the Squire is, and who you are.

TOBY. That's what I intend to let him know. I shall tell him if landlords are too proud or too idle to look after the comforts of their tenants, and to live upon their own lands, why 'tis a great pity that Providence should have entrusted them with any. What! haven't we paid truly for sixty years? And now that a rascal should screw, and grind, and crush us—No; 'tis a good thought, for it's come so late—I'll go to London.

POLLY. Martin may yet bring good news.

TOBY. He may; but I'll provide against the worst. You go to Rachel—I'll be hence soon. My luggage won't stop my speed upon the road. Yes; and now I have it, I'll once more to the mansion; and if old Crumbs be as deaf as ever, I'll see if the Squire himself be not less hard of hearing than his servant. [*Exit TOBY.*]

SCENE II.

A Copse.

Enter RACHEL in flight.

RACHEL. I hear his step. Yes, there again. 'Tis he. Could I but gain the main road;—I cannot stir. I am almost dead with grief and fear. (*She hides.*)

Enter SILVER JACK, in pursuit.

JACK. This was the place. I'm sure it was here!

Enter HYSSOP, hastily.

HYSSOP. Jack, is 't you?

JACK. Ay! did you pass a woman in fast flight?

HYSSOP. A woman! Will you never be serious? Come with me.

JACK. Stop till I have found my runaway.

HYSSOP. And lost a golden prize. I was coming for you.

JACK. A prize!—Whas do you mean?

HYSSOP. That visitor at the mansion! Why, he has heaps of guineas, rings, and a brilliant snuff-box, that alone would make us.

JACK. Well!

HYSSOP. Well!—If you're the Silver Jack of yesterday they must be ours.

JACK. How?

HYSSOP. Easily. He is now in bed. I have left open all the doors.—(*RACHEL shows herself through the trees, listening.*) We can get into his chamber, and then—

JACK. But if he wake and resist?

HYSSOP. A knife!

JACK. The booty is large?

HYSSOP. I tell you enough to set us up.

JACK. Where the devil can that woman have flown?

HYSSOP. A woman!—It's a pity women are n't thief-catchers, for they'd only have to show you the darbies, and you'd run your hands into 'em. Will you join me, or shall I do the work alone?

JACK. I'm for you. But you're too much of a philosopher; you should consider one's little frailties. (*Taking out small pocket-pistols, and looking at priming, &c.*) Man was born to love, and that's my weakness. If he stir, here are two bullets for his head. The doors are open, you say?

[*During the preceding speeches RACHEL expresses her resolution to give their victim notice, and glides off.*]

And now for the shiners.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter MARTIN HEYWOOD.

MARTIN. Poor Rachel! I had n't the heart to go to the farm. For her—for my children's sake, I'll once more try to move the steward. It almost chokes me to think of it; but it must be tried. Every one refuses me: 't is my last hope. If that fail too, 't is needless to whimper about it—good bye, farm—good bye, England! I have promised to give my answer to-day; and it may be to-night we sleep upon the sea. Now, for master Crumbs, to beg and pray, and be refused. He is an early riser, and I may now see him without fear of interruption. If he denies me, why then for a foreign home, for I have lost my own. [Exit.

SCENE III.

An old Gallery in the Mansion. Door in Scene, leading into Apartment.

Enter HYSSOP and JACK. RACHEL glides in, and retires at back.

HYSSOP. You see all the doors were open.

JACK. Yes; it's what I call house-breaking made easy. No one stirring either. Where's Crumbs?

HYSSOP. Vanished in a blue flame, for what I know. I hope he means no mischief; but I've scarcely seen him since he went with you to the farm. Should he blow on us now—

JACK. He dares not; 't would cost him his neck.

HYSSOP. Yet we'll not trust him. We'll do this piece of work on our own behalf. Then—for I've left nothing unprovided—there are a couple of horses, ready saddled, in the stable; we'll spare not the spur: and once off, let the steward settle the account as best he may.

JACK. Where does the spark sleep?

HYSSOP. In yonder chamber. I have secured the key. The bird is nicely caged. Come!

[Goes to door, opens it, leaving the key in. JACK pulls HYSSOP back.]

JACK. Stay, Frank. I've been thinking of it—there must be no blood in this.

HYSSOP. That's at the option of the gentleman. I've no objection, if it can be made comfortable to him.

JACK. 'T would make a stir that might be fatal to us. You must promise me.

HYSSOP. As far as I can keep my temper I do. Now, then, for there's no time to lose.

[At this moment RACHEL, who has secured the key, glides into the room. She is seen by HYSSOP, who staggers back.]

Ha! trapped!

JACK *(clapping his hand to his pistols)*. What do you mean?

HYSSOP. A woman entered that room.

JACK. You dream! *(Rushes to door and looks through key-hole.)*

HYSSOP *(listening)*. There! I hear her footstep.

JACK. Why, no—yes; it is the farmer's wife!

HYSSOP. And there! (*RACHEL is heard to turn the key in the lock.*) She locks the door. We're rarely gulled. Now there's but one plan. We'll force the way.

JACK (*stopping him and pointing off with astonishment*). Her husband! [*They retire up.*]

Enter MARTIN.

MARTIN. All the doors open, yet not a soul about. (*Sees them.*) Is the steward—Surely (*recognizing JACK*) 't is he who was put into the farm. (*Aside.*)

JACK (*to HYSSOP*). Peace! I have it. You wanted the steward?

MARTIN. Yes. Did he not put you into my house?

JACK. Ay, but I've finished my errand there; 't was not the pleasantest.

MARTIN. I come to beg for time. Had I any one to intercede for me——

JACK. You may be quite easy. You have a friend, depend on't.

MARTIN. I know not where.

JACK (*pointing to room*). There! in that room is a young London spark, the Squire's acquaintance; the door locked, and with him—yes, you'll keep the farm—'t was he who sent me to your house.

MARTIN. He—for what?

JACK. You've a pretty wife; he has plenty of money. I delivered my message, and there your wife is.

MARTIN. My wife! villain! (*Seizes him.*) Unsay the slander, on your knees unsay it, or, were you the father of all lies, I would not quit you!

JACK. Leave your hold! I say your wife——

MARTIN. My Rachel! (*Bewildered.*) Why, how you look at me!

JACK. Knock at the door, perhaps she'll answer.

MARTIN. I am a wretched, ruined man! but do not play with me. Grief has worn me, but revenge will make me strong. If this be a lie——

JACK. Knock at the door.

MARTIN. There seems blood before my eyes; and I feel of a sudden weak and old.

JACK. Knock at the door.

MARTIN. I'll tear his life out! (*Crosses to door.*)

HYSSOP. Why, that's manful! Here's that will help you. (*Cocking a pistol and forcing it into MARTIN's hand.*)

MARTIN (*rushing to the door*). Come out, I say!

*Enter GRANTLEY, armed with a brace of pistols,
RACHEL following him.*

GRANTLEY (*speaking as he enters*). Villains! I am armed!

MARTIN. Die!

RACHEL (*screaming and running before GRANTLEY*). Martin! what would you?

MARTIN. What! you cling to him—before my eyes! —Rachel Heywood, I forgive that man. (*Dropping the pistol.*) [JACK and HYSSOP *glide off*.

Let him but send a bullet through the heart you've broken, and I will thank him with my last breath.

GRANTLEY. This your husband—and leagued with the robbers!

RACHEL. No, no; he knows not what he says. Grief has distracted him.

MARTIN. Yes, grief! Falsehood, where I hoped for truth. Scorn, where I had looked for love. Shame, where I had built my greatest pride.

GRANTLEY. Go, I pardon you—I spare you.

MARTIN. Pardon! Spare! I have at home four motherless children! What, do you spare me them? Will you leave the poor man one miserable comfort?

RACHEL. Husband!

MARTIN. Can your lips yet say that word?—Heaven forgive you!—can you yet speak it? Let it be for the last time! Never let us look again upon each other's face. (*She clings to him.*) Away! (*Casting her off.*) My heart sinks at your touch! I leave you; and may God pardon and protect you! (*Rushes off.*)

RACHEL. Martin! Martin! Oh, he is lost with misery!

GRANTLEY. Fear not; for your sake I will not accuse him.

RACHEL. Accuse!

GRANTLEY. Nay, I perceive and value your motives. You would not suffer your husband to become a criminal. You preserved, it may be, my life. I thank you, and pardon him.

RACHEL. And was it for this I saved you?—for this have endured the bitterest words that wife can listen to?—for this have made him mad? Sir, I never saw you till this hour. I never heard of you till named by villains who would have destroyed you. Then I flew to give you warning—I saved you—and you give me this reward—suspicion of my husband!

GRANTLEY. Your eloquence, my good woman, does

not deceive me. The other villains shall be pursued. For your husband, trust me, he is safe. [*Exit.*]

RACHEL. 'Tis no matter; I will go home. Home! did he not forbid me? Oh, he knew not what he said. And yet he found me—Oh, that he should harbour such a thought! I will fly and explain all; for now I should go mad to live one moment from him. [*Exit.*]

Enter CRUMBS.

CRUMBS. All is stored, all packed!—all the harvest of my thrift and enmity. Ye cursed walls, I leave ye to your owner—to him whom I had vainly hoped to beggar—to sink into the dust a wretched, undone spendthrift! May ye become the haunt of gamesters—of hungry, smooth-faced knaves, who flatter and devour! May ye be staked upon a card, and pass from him who stakes ye! For ten years have I dwelt here, nursing my revenge. For ten years has vengeance been to me as a food—a nourishment. I have lived and gloated on it. May others finish the ruin I've begun! Now I must leave, ere my visitor—plagues light upon him!—be stirring. That villain, Jack, is still at Heywood's farm—his companion yet asleep. I live within the gallows' foot whilst near them—I have hid my treasure in the laurel hedge—I've bought the captain of the vessel, and this night I leave the shore. I walk 'mongst pitfalls whilst I tread it.

BULLFROG runs in.

BULLFROG. Oh, Mr. Crumbs, such an affair!

CRUMBS. Peace, ye roaring fool! (*Going.*)

BULLFROG. Fool! Early as it is you're the second man who has called me a fool this morning. I come upon business.

CRUMBS. To-night—to-morrow!

BULLFROG. Not my maxim. Shut your door upon business, and business will soon forget to knock at it. Your friend, Captain Jack—

CRUMBS. What of him?

BULLFROG. He might be a good hand to put in possession if one were to distrain a nunnery; but where a quick eye is to be kept on chairs and tables, he's as blind as Cupid.

CRUMBS. What jargon is this?

BULLFROG. I only hope there'll not be an action; but, if there should be—

CRUMBS. Speak out, or I'll throttle you. (*Grasping him.*)

BULLFROG. There certainly is a conspiracy to call me fool and choke me. Don't stare at me in that manner; it is n't business-like.

CRUMBS. Speak, or be gone.

BULLFROG. Well, then, it's a serious truth that the Heywoods might clear out the farm! for nobody is there to prevent them.

CRUMBS. Is that all?

BULLFROG. All? What, where I have once seized? What's to become of my reputation? I employ nobody but respectable, steady men. The fact is, Captain Jack was above his calling, for he made love to the farmer's wife.

CRUMBS. Well!

BULLFROG. Not well, Mr. Crumbs. When a man's on business he should be above such trifles.

CRUMBS. Where is he now?

BULLFROG. Run off—left the premises in the most scandalous manner. I shouldn't wonder if he comes here.

CRUMBS (*aside*). I must begone.

BULLFROG. You are not going? I must put another man in, you know. I say I must—

CRUMBS. Leave me.

BULLFROG. Business! Who shall I put in? (*Follows him.*)

CRUMBS (*furiously*). Any one—no one—the devil!
[*Rushes off.*]

BULLFROG. I'll have nothing more to do with any of your acquaintance. Why, he's quite a fury. I see it—I know he dabbles—stocks must have fallen. Nothing else could put a man in such a passion.

STEPHEN *is hurrying across.*

Stephen, Stephen! I'll ask him.

STEPHEN. I can't stop now. The whole place is in an uproar.

BULLFROG. Well, they've kept it very quiet. What's the matter?

STEPHEN. There's been robbery, and nearly—

BULLFROG. Robbery?

STEPHEN. And nearly murder.

BULLFROG. Murder's very bad, but I hope there's no property lost?

STEPHEN. We don't know what's lost yet. But for

the two chaps you drank with and were such friends, the gentleman offers a reward for whoever seizes them.

BULLFROG. A reward!—I'll put on my cricketing pumps and run directly. Are they thieves, think you?

STEPHEN. You've been more in their company than I have. There's Toby Heywood in the garden. Go and talk to him. Business, you know —

BULLFROG. Business!—right. Toby here! then I'll just run and put Noakes into the farm, and then after my friends. I say, what's happened to Mr. Crumbs?

STEPHEN. Why, between you and me, the steward—but while I talk to you, I may miss what the gentleman offers. *[Runs off.]*

BULLFROG. Something wrong with the steward! If he should go out, I might come in. I'll run and show my activity. *[Runs off.]*

SCENE IV.

The interior of HEYWOOD'S Farm.

MARTIN *discovered seated in his arm chair. His Children grouped about him.*

MARTIN. And this, then, is the end! All's gone!—I cannot carry with me even a hope of better days. Now, indeed, labour will be hard to me; for I shall work with a broken heart. Now, fortune cannot bless me; for she with whom I should have shared all good—But let me think no more of her. Think, no more! Like a ghost she seems to haunt me. But she has shamed me, and may she—! No, I cannot curse her with her children looking in my face. I will not curse her; I must say farewell to the home where I was born—where I had hoped to die. Oh! as I think of the long past days, as I sit here staring my last at these walls, those who are now in their graves come gathering about me:—faces, that seem a part of the place—that seem as they had never been away; looks that take me back, and make me a child again. All from then till now is like a dream; the things of my boyhood alone seem real: all else is

RACHEL (*without door*). Martin! Martin!

MARTIN (*starting*). No, no;—that is real—would it were not (*to Children*) Go, bolt the door.

Boy. Why, it is my mother. I musn't bolt the door against my mother.

MARTIN. No—I had forgot. A good child! you must not. (*The Boy runs and opens the door.*)

RACHEL (*running in*). Martin! dear Martin!

MARTIN (*rising*). Rachel, if you can look in my face, and do not sink with shame, can you look on these? (*Pointing to Children*.)

RACHEL. Shame!—you are deceived.

MARTIN. I have been—so deceived, that had a voice from the sky called you what it tears my heart to think of, I would not have listened to it. But these eyes—these eyes!—oh! that I had been blind!

RACHEL. You never loved me if you will not hear me.

MARTIN. Never loved you! It was that love that smoothed all trouble to me. It was that love, that, when all men, fortune, seemed set against me, cheered me on, and put a strength into my heart—that made me smile as I would think: Well, let all go, let all else fail me, there is one who'll never change—there is one who is as good, as constant as the angels. Poverty came upon me—the blow was sudden and unkind. Still I thought, though we have but a crust, we'll share that crust together; though our bed be straw, that bed shall bear us both!—As you say, I am deceived.

RACHEL. But hear me, Martin; then judge me as you will!

MARTIN. That man—that devil, whom they put here—would his blood were on my hearth!—did he not tempt you!

RACHEL. He did.

MARTIN. With gold—filthy gold? He came into the poor man's house—bought that which I thought worlds could never buy—robbed me of my wife, these children of their mother.

RACHEL. Martin, may you be pardoned that thought! It is true that man showed me gold—dared to speak—to seize me—but I cast his money in the dust, I tore myself from his arms.

MARTIN. His arms! (*Passionately*.) Woman! I would not kill you.

RACHEL. I fled and hid myself—listened to a plan of murder, and ran to the mansion.

MARTIN. I found you there, coming from his chamber.

RACHEL. I knew not the man! 'T was to save his life. Upon my soul I speak the truth!

MARTIN (*with emotion*). A lie—a foul lie!

RACHEL. The truth, or may I die at your feet. Oh, Martin! can you think thus of me, after the years—the happy years? Or am I become tiresome to you, and so with this excuse you'd—

MARTIN. Excuse! Are these tears an excuse—these trembling limbs, these scalded eyes, this broken heart?
(*Sinks into chair.*)

Enter Sailor.

SAILOR (*speaking at door*). Now, master, if you're for starting, we shall sail in an hour. Here's a whole crew of neighbours, too, coming to take leave of you.
(*Disappears from door.*)

RACHEL. Martin!

MARTIN. I have accepted the place abroad, to tend an estate, (*with suppressed disgust*) and overlook the slaves. I leave the farm—the country, this day.

RACHEL. The children?—

MARTIN. They go with me.

RACHEL. And I, Martin—I?

MARTIN. Go where you will, may you be happy!

RACHEL (*wildly*). My children! Use me as you please, but my babes!—Oh, Martin! what madness is upon you? Hear me! You shall hear me. If it must be so, think not of me as your wife; but have mercy on the mother of your children!

MARTIN. I love them, Rachel.

RACHEL. Dearly, very dearly; but not like a mother.

MARTIN. Bid them farewell, for they must go.

RACHEL. But not without me! Children, pray to your father—pray to him I must not call my husband!
(*Kneeling to MARTIN.*)

MARTIN. Rachel, this is wild and useless. Be calm and give them up.

RACHEL. I tell you I shall go mad—raving mad—to lose my children! Take me with them. I do not ask you to speak to me, to look at me; let me work with the slaves you speak of; let me die, so as I die not from my children! (*Faints, and falls over the knee of MARTIN—the children surrounding her.*)

Enter FARMER BEANSTALK, POLLY, Dame, Neighbours and Sailor.

FARMER. Why, Martin, and bee'st thee really going?
(*Sees RACHEL.*) Why, what's the matter with thee, wife?

POLLY. Bless me, Rachel! (*They bear her to the back.*)

MARTIN. Farmer, farewell; neighbours, heaven bless you! Let the landlord take all the rest—this chair—my grandfather's chair—I'll bear with me.

Enter BULLFROG and two Rusties at door.

BULLFROG. Not a splinter of it, as I'm a sworn appraiser.

MARTIN. I do not wish to hurt you, man; but do not strive to prevent me.

BULLFROG. Must n't move a stick, Mr. Heywood. Business is business.

MARTIN. I tell you this chair shall with me. Let him who dares, lay a finger on it. (*Is about to lift the chair. BULLFROG advances.*)

BULLFROG. Business is business. I seize in the King's name!

MARTIN. Then you must fight for it.

[*They both seize the chair. In the struggle the back of the chair is pulled off, when out fall loose gold, small money-bags and a paper.*]

ALL. Gold! Money!

BULLFROG. I seize it in the King's name.

FARMER (*throwing him aside*). What be this? (*Taking up paper.*) Your grandfather's name.

MARTIN (*takes paper, glances at it, endeavouring to read it, and then returns it to BEANSTALK*). Read, read!

FARMER (*reads*): "Should any sudden accident light upon me, so that I be not able to tell my last wishes, let this certify, that the three hundred guineas hidden, with this paper, in my walnut chair, be the rightful property of Martin and Tobias Heywood, my grandsons. Signed, Thomas Heywood." This is rare, Martin! I give thee joy! (*Neighbours shout.*)

MARTIN. I shall keep the farm!—ha, ha!—I shall keep the farm! (*Sinks upon the neck of Farmer.*)

Enter GRANTLEY at door.

GRANTLEY. Where is Mr. Heywood? (*Advancing.*)

MARTIN. Come not here, man—come not here!

GRANTLEY. Be calm. I have injured you—in thought, I mean. All your neighbours praise you for an honest, upright man. I thought you the companion of scoundrels. But for your wife, whose devotedness I have wronged, I had fallen their victim. She came to save me——

TOBY (*without*). Come along, rascal! Stand out of the way!

Enters, dragging in CRUMBS. Servant following, carrying a box. MARTIN and Farmer retire up stage.

CRUMBS. Villain! why am I thus used?

TOBY (to GRANTLEY). Here is the rascal, Sir. You know we found that box among the laurel trees. Luckily, you took my advice, and let it rest. We watched, and, as I expected, the thief came creeping down to carry away the spoil. We pounced upon him—here he is, and here's his plunder.

GRANTLEY. What answer make you to this?

CRUMBS. None to you. I shall make a clear answer to Mr. Robert Grantley.

GRANTLEY. Then speak. Robert Grantley is before you. (*General surprise.*) What!—you shrink! I had heard of your oppression. I wrote for further sums of money, and then, under a feigned character, came to witness the means you'd take to answer the demand. Fie upon you! My father left you to husband my estate; it was your duty to check my extravagance, not feed it. And now, you add to your iniquity by wholesale theft. What say you to this?

CRUMBS. Robert Grantley—since you are he—listen. At the mansion you saw a certain picture. You remember you asked me whose it was. I'll tell you. It was the likeness of a young and once virtuous wife. A devil, a golden devil, dazzled her vain heart, and she left her husband and disgraced him. That husband plunged in vice to fly from thought. He gamed, robbed, and was devoted to the thief's reward—the gallows. He escaped, and fled abroad. Years passed away. In a foreign land he met his wife's destroyer, who, knowing not the man he had wronged, fostered him—took him to his heart—made him his man of trust, and brought him to England. He died, and left him to manage his estate for his wild and absent son. Robert Grantley, that man was your father; the picture is the picture of his victim; I—I was her wronged and broken-hearted husband.

GRANTLEY. Can it be?

CRUMBS. My purpose was to beggar you—to revenge me on the father in his dearest part, his darling son.

GRANTLEY. Your injuries were great; yet how could your malice survive the author of your wrongs?

CRUMBS. That picture! I have stood and looked at it,—in the still night I have gazed on it, until I have thought the devil himself looked from its eyes, and smiled upon my purpose. That picture, and the recollection that those cursed walls received my wife when she fled from her home, and left me to seek companions with the vile and infamous.—Oh, I am an old man!—but there are injuries so graven in the heart, so burnt within the brain,

that with the heart and brain, must live and die together! Enough. Now for my gaol.

GRANTLEY. No, I pardon you; nay more, will provide for you.

CRUMBS. Never. I scorn and spit at you.—Am I free?

STEPHEN *and others bring in* SILVER JACK *and* HYSSOP *bound.*

STEPHEN. Here are the thieves. (*To GRANTLEY.*) I was told you were here, Sir, and so I have brought them.—Bob, the carter here, saw them on the road, and knowing our cattle, gave the cry; they were soon unhorsed, and here they are, ready trussed for the gibbet. We found these few matters on them. (*Showing dice, cards, picklocks, &c.*) And here is something folded up. (*Gives paper to GRANTLEY.*)

GRANTLEY. What is this?—(*Reading bill.*) “Escaped from Newgate—John Harris!”—Who can this mean?

CRUMBS. The man your father robbed! Read and see what time and he have made of him. I took ten guineas from a rich usurer, and was condemned for Tyburn. Your father stole the wife of my bosom, and lived a wealthy, charitable gentleman,—had the respect of all while on the earth, and a lying tombstone when under it. May I leave now? (*GRANTLEY bows.*)

CRUMBS *looks fiercely around him, exchanges a look of contempt with JACK and HYSSOP, and rushes off.*

JACK. Perhaps we're intruding; may we leave too?

GRANTLEY. Away with them, and keep them for the present.

STEPHEN. They deserve hanging, if it's only for the lies they told about Mr. Heywood's wife. Why, they've been laughing over it as a good joke,—(*JACK and HYSSOP laugh*)—that they tried to make Martin jealous, that he might save them the sin of blowing out your brains. Oh, you rascals!—your hanging day will be a rare holiday thirty miles round.

STEPHEN, &c. *take JACK and HYSSOP off.*

MARTIN. Rachel! Can I be forgiven? I dare not look at you. (*RACHEL throws herself into his arms.*)

TOBY. I don't wonder at that. He is a poor wizard whom every fool can drive mad. Suspect Rachel! why if we weren't all made so happy with our old grandfather's gold, I'd turn boy again, and thrash you myself. Here was Bullfrog trying to disturb me and my wife.

BULLFROG. Wife!

TOBY. Yes. I shall never know what to do with my part of the money, so I must have a wife, to get her advice about it. (*Taking POLLY's arm.*) I hope (*to BULLFROG*) you've no objection?

BULLFROG. None, (*aside*) as the money's not on the other side. But business is business; you'll want furniture; I have the sweetest four-post bedstead you ever looked upon.

MARTIN (*to GRANTLEY*). I have now, Sir, to ask your pardon. Can you excuse the passion of an oppressed—

GRANTLEY. Nay, it is I who have to ask forgiveness of you, and of all my tenants; that I have suffered them to be the victims of a mercenary agent. I will, henceforth, reside on my lands; and by my future care, endeavour to remedy the injuries committed by my servant. To your wife, Heywood, I probably owe my existence. This farm has, I hear, been in your family for sixty years; may it remain so while the country stands! To-morrow shall give you a freeholder's right to it.

NEIGHBOURS, &c. Huzza! Huzza!

BULLFROG. Well, this is capital. I see (*aside*) I'm future steward to that young man. But still I have to say one thing. Friendship and generosity are very well; but—(*to MARTIN*) now, it doesn't concern you,—you're a freeholder; all of us here are n't so lucky; therefore, as business is business, I trust nobody here will forget

“THE RENT DAY.”

THE END.

Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd was born in 1798, at Stafford. His father was a brewer, and an Independent Dissenter, to which sect also his mother belonged, her father being an Independent Minister. Talfourd was trained for the law, and gave the greater part of his life to this profession, but he had a supplementary source of income, as a dramatist, and an ambition in more prosperous days. He lived much in literary society, and was the friend of Charles Lamb, Wordsworth, Leigh Hunt, Dickens and Macready. In spite of literature being often an obstacle to a lawyer's success, Talfourd secured a seat on the bench.

In 1835 he printed, for private circulation, the tragedy of "Ion", which was reviewed with great flourish of trumpets in the "Quarterly", and other journals; it was then published, and on the occasion of Macready's benefit, on the 26th May, 1836, it was acted,— "for this night only", said the play bills—but the great success of the performance naturally cancelled such a resolution, and the tragedy was played for many nights. It has since been a favorite with actors and the public; and although the enthusiasm with which it was first received has very considerably abated, it still remains one of the few poetical dramas which naturally rise to the recollection of any one speaking of our contemporary theatre. Two years after the production of "Ion", Talfourd made another experiment on the public taste for classical subjects; but this—"The Athenian Captive"—was far less successful; and he quitted classical ground, to try that of Scottish History, in a tragedy on the subject of "Glencoe", which was per-

TALFOURD.

formed in 1840—also with very moderate success. He tried no more. He probably felt that "Ion" was a lucky accident, and that his powers were not eminently dramatic. On the 11th March 1854, he opened the Assizes at Stafford as usual, and on the 13th delivered his charge to the Grand Jury, with great impressiveness; while going meaning on the increase of crime and its causes, he was seen to become very excited; suddenly his face flushed, his head bent forward, and his body wavered. He was quickly carried out of court to the judge's chambers—

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I O N:

A TRAGEDY

IN FIVE ACTS.

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ADRASTUS, *King of Argos.*

MEDON, *High Priest of the Temple of Apollo.*

CRYTHES, *Captain of the Royal Guard.*

PHOCION, *son of Medon.*

CTESIPHON,	}	<i>noble Argive youths.</i>
CASSANDER,		

ION, *a foundling youth.*

AGENOR,	}	<i>sages of Argos.</i>
CLEON,		
TIMOCLES,		

IRUS, *a boy, slave to AGENOR.*

CLEMANTHE, *daughter of MEDON.*

HABRA, *attendant on CLEMANTHE.*

SCENE.—ARGOS.

The TIME of the Action is comprised in one day and night, and the following morning.

PREFACE.

THIS tragedy was first printed for private circulation in April, 1835. The following extracts from the preface with which it was then accompanied, disclose the little history of its composition, and the feeling with which it was originally committed to the press.

"The title of this Drama is borrowed from the Tragedy of Euripides, which gave the first hint of the situation in which its hero is introduced—that of a foundling youth educated in a temple, and assisting in its services; but otherwise there is no resemblance between this imperfect sketch and that exquisite picture. It has been written, not indeed without a view to an ideal stage, which should never be absent from the mind of the humblest aspirant to dramatic composition, but without any hope of rendering it worthy to be acted. If it were regarded as a drama composed for actual representation, I am well aware that not in 'matter of form' only, but in 'matter of substance,' it would be found wanting. The idea of the principal character,—that of a nature essentially pure and disinterested, deriving its strength entirely from goodness and thought, not overcoming evil by the force of will, but escaping it by an insensibility to its approach,—vividly conscious of existence and its pleasures, yet ready to lay them down at the call of duty,—is scarcely capable of being rendered sufficiently striking in itself, or of being subjected to such agitations, as tragedy requires in the fortunes of its heroes. It was further necessary, in order to involve such a character in circumstances which might excite terror or grief or joy, to introduce other machinery

than that of passions working naturally within, or events arising from ordinary and probable motives without; as its own elements would not supply the contests of tragic emotion, nor would its sufferings, however accumulated, present a varied or impressive picture. Recourse has therefore been had, not only to the old Grecian notion of Destiny, apart from all moral agencies, and to a prophecy indicating its purport, in reference to the individuals involved in its chain, but to the idea of *fascination*, as an engine by which Fate may work its purposes on the innocent mind, and force it into terrible action most uncongenial to itself, but necessary to the issue. Either perhaps of these aids might have been permitted, if used in accordance with the entire spirit of the piece; but the employment of *both* could not be justified in a drama intended for visual presentation, in which a certain verisimilitude is essential to the faith of the spectator. Whether any groups, surrounded with the associations of the Greek Mythology, and subjected to the capricious laws of Greek superstition, could be endowed by genius itself with such present life as to awaken the sympathies of an English audience, may well be doubted; but it cannot be questioned, that except by sustaining a stern unity of purpose, and breathing an atmosphere of Grecian sentiment over the whole, so as to render the picture national and coherent in all its traits, the effect must be unsatisfactory and unreal. Conscious of my inability to produce a work thus justified to the imagination by its own completeness and power, I have not attempted it; but have sought, out of mere weakness, for 'Fate and metaphysical aid,' to 'crown withal' the ordinary persons of a romantic play. I have, therefore, asked too much for a spectator to grant: but the case is different with the reader who does not seek the powerful excitements of the theatre, nor is bound to a continuous attention; and who, for the sake of scattered sentiments or expressions which may please him, may, at least, by a latitude of friendly allowance, forgive the incongruities of the machinery by which the story is conducted. This drama may be described as the phantasm of a tragedy,—not a thing of substance mortised into the living rock of humanity,—and therefore incapable of exciting that interest which grows out of human feeling, or of holding that permanent place in the memory which truth only can retain.

"There are few perhaps among those who have written for the press, predominant as that majority now is over

the minority of mere readers, who have not, at some season of their lives, contemplated the achievement of a tragedy. The narrow and well-defined limits by which the action of tragedy is circumscribed—the various affections which may live and wrestle, and suffer within those palpable boundaries—its appeal to the sources of grief common to humanity on the one hand, and to the most majestic shapings of the imagination on the other, softening and subduing the heart to raise and to ennoble it,—and perhaps, more than all, the vivid presentment of the forms in which the strengths and weaknesses of our nature are embodied, its calamities dignified, and its high destiny vindicated, even in the mortal struggle by which for a season it is vanquished,—may well impress every mind, reaching, however feebly, towards the creative, with a fond desire to imitate the great masters of its ‘so potent art.’ This desire has a powerful ally in the exuberant spirits of youth, when the mind, unchilled by the realities of life, searches for novelty in those forms of sorrow, from which it afterwards may turn for relief to the flickerings of mirth, and to brief snatches of social pleasure. Perhaps ‘gorgeous tragedy’ left a deeper impression when she passed ‘sweeping by’ my intellectual vision, than would have been otherwise received by a mind unapt for so high a correspondence, by reason of the accident that the glimpse was stolen. Denied by the conscientious scruples of friends an early acquaintance with plays, I had derived from Mrs. More’s ‘Sacred Dramas’ my first sense of that peculiar enjoyment which the idea of dramatic action, however imperfectly conveyed, gives; and, stiff and cumbrous as they now seem, I owe to their author that debt of gratitude, which others may perhaps share with me, who have first looked on the world of literature through the net-work of sincere but exclusive opinions. These gave, however, but dim limits of the greatness which was behind;—I looked into the domain of tragedy as into a mountain region covered with mist and cloud;—and incapable of appreciating the deep humanities of Shakspeare, ‘rested and expatiated’ in the brocaded grandeurs of Dryden, Rowe, and Addison. To describe the delight with which, for the first time, I saw the curtain of Covent Garden Theatre raised for the representation of *Cato*, would be idle,—or how it was sustained during the noble performance which followed, when the visions of Roman constancy and classic grace, which had haunted the mind through all its schoolboy years (then drawing to a close), seemed bodied forth in

palpable form, when the poor common-places of an artificial diction flowed 'mended from the tongue' of the actor, and the thoughtful words trembling on his lips suggested at once the feeling of earthly weakness and of immortal hope,—and when the old stoic, in his rigid grandeur was reconciled to the human heart by the struggle of paternal love, and became "passioned as ourselves," without losing any portion of that statue-like dignity which made him the representative of a world of heroic dreamings.

"After this glimpse of the acted drama, I was long haunted by the idle wish to write a tragedy; and many hours did I happily, but vainly, spend in sober contemplations of its theme. I tried to wreath several romantic and impossible stories, which I fashioned in my evening walks into acts, and began to write a scene; but however pleased I might be with the outline of these fantasies, I was too much disgusted with the alternate baldness and fustian of the blank verse, which I produced in the attempt to execute them, to proceed. At this time also just as the laborious avocations of my life were commencing, my taste and feeling, as applied to poetry, underwent an entire change consequent on my becoming acquainted with the poetry of Wordsworth. That power which, slighted and scoffed at as it was then, has since exerted a purifying influence on the literature of this country, such as no other individual power has ever wrought; which has not only given to the material universe 'a speech and a language' before unheard, but has opened new sources of enjoyment even in the works of the greatest poets of past days, and imparted a new sense by which we may relish them;—which, while on the one hand it has dissipated the sickly fascinations of gaudy phraseology, has, on the other, cast around the lowliest conditions a new and exquisite light, and traced out the links of good by which all human things are bound together, and clothed our earthly life in the solemnities which belong to its origin and its destiny—humbled the pride of my swelling conceits, and taught me to look on the mighty works of genius, not with the presumption of an imitator, but with the veneration of a child. The love of contemplative poetry, thus inspired, led me, in such leisure as I could attain, rather to ponder over the resources of the profoundest emotions, or to regard them as associated with the majestic forms of the universe, than to follow them into their violent conflicts and mournful catastrophes; and although I never ceased to regard the acted drama as the most delightful of recreations,

I sought no longer to work out a frigid imitation of writers, whom alone I could hope to copy, and whose enchantments were dissipated by more genial magic.

"But the tragic drama was about to revive amongst us, and I was not insensible to its progress. Although the tragedies of the last twelve years are not worthy to be compared with the noblest productions of the great age of our drama, they are with two or three exceptions, far superior to any which had been written in the interval. Since the last skirts of the glory of Shakspeare's age disappeared, we shall search in vain for serious plays of equal power and beauty with *Virginus*, *William Tell*, *Mirandola*, *Rienzi*, or the *Merchant of London*; at least, if we except *Venice Preserved* for the admirable conduct of its story, and *Douglas* for that romantic tenderness and pathos which have been too little appreciated of late years. It happened to me to be intimately acquainted with all those who contributed to this impulse, and to take an immediate interest in their successes. I also enjoyed the friendship of the delightful artist to whom all have by turns been indebted for the realisation of their noblest conceptions, and was enabled to enjoy with more exquisite relish the home-born affection with which those were endued, and the poetical spirit breathed around them, by finding the same influences shed by Mr. Macready over the sphere of his social and domestic life. It will not be surprising, that, to one thus associated, the old wish to accomplish something in dramatic shape should recur, not accompanied by the hopes of sharing in the scenic triumphs of his friends, but bounded by the possibility of conducting a tale through dialogue to a close, and of making it subserve to the expression of some cherished thoughts. In this state of feeling, some years ago, the scheme of the drama of *Ion* presented itself to me; and after brooding over it for some time, I wrote a prose outline of its successive scenes, nearly in the order and to the effect in which they are now completed, and made some progress in an opening scene of which little now remains. The attempt was soon laid aside; for I found the composition of dramatic blank verse even more difficult now that I had present to me the ease and vividness of my friends, than when I had been contented to emulate the ponderous lines of the dramatists of Garrick's age. Still the idea of my hero occurred to me often; I found my pleasantest thoughts gathering about him; and rather more than two years ago I determined to make one essay more. Since that

time, such seasons of leisure as I could find have been devoted to the work; but I had so great distrust of my ability to complete it, that I did not mention my design to any one; and I cannot charge myself with having permitted it to interfere with any professional or private duty. At the close of last year, I found four acts reduced into form. At this time, the sudden realisation of another youthful dream opened to me the prospect of additional duties, which I knew full well ought to preclude the continuance of those secret flirtations with the Muse in which I had indulged; and therefore I resolved to make a last effort, and, by completing my drama before those duties should commence, to free myself from the bondage of those threads of fantastical interest which had woven themselves about my mind. I accordingly wrote the fifth act with far more rapidity than any of the previous passages of my play; and, before I was called upon to share in more momentous business, I had communicated to a few friends the result of my scribblings, and bade adieu to my dramatic endeavours and hopes.

“But it may well be asked, Why, with the sense I have confessed of the feebleness of this poetical sketch, I venture to intrude it on my friends? My chief reason is, that I am anxious to cast from my own mind the associations which have hung about it during the composition of the poem, and which, while it remained in manuscript susceptible of alteration, I could not certainly hope for; and, further, to preclude the charge (if it should ever be brought to light hereafter), that it had occupied leisure which henceforth must be devoted to other studies. I have also a desire to gratify myself by presenting it to my friends, especially to those who are removed to a distance; because, although as a *drama* it is unworthy the attention of the world, yet, as containing thoughts which have passed through my own mind, it may be acceptable to those whose conversation I can no longer enjoy. It would be a sufficient reason to myself for printing it, that I shall be able thus to remind Sir Edward Ryan, now, most honourably to himself, and happily for India, Chief Justice of Bengal, and his excellent colleague, Sir Benjamin Malkin, of the delightful hours we have spent together on the Oxford circuit, when life was younger with us, and when some of the topics they will find just touched on in these verses were the themes of our graver walks between Ross and Monmouth, or in the deep winding valleys indenting the table-land above Church Stretton, or haply by moonlight in the Churchyard of

Ross.¹ I take leave to mention these, as far away; but there are others of my fellow-labourers at home, whose sympathy and whose conversation have cheered my professional life, who I believe will receive it cordially; and among them I hope my sometime Sessions-leader, who has committed a similar offence, though with more extenuating circumstances, by investing with so much dignity of passion and richness of language the story of the *Countess of Essex*, will not disdain it."

With these views *Ion* was sent to the press, and presented to many of my friends. The favour with which it was received by some, whose approbation was most valuable, would have induced me at once to publish it, if I had not been withheld by the suggestion of Mr. Macready, that it would be effective in representation, and by the belief that any interest which might be excited by such an attempt would be lessened by its previous sale. The prospect, that, at least for one evening, the dull tracery of thought, silently and laboriously woven, might burst into light at the torch of sympathy and become palpable to the senses and the affections of a multitude, was too delightful to be resigned, and was ultimately realised by the friend who had opened it. His consent to produce the drama on the night of his benefit secured it against painful repulse; and, although I had still no expectation that even *he* could endue it with sufficient interest to render it attractive on ordinary occasions, I looked forward to its single representation in the belief that it would be tolerated by an audience disposed to be gratified, and that the impression it might leave, however faint, would be genial and pure. Many of those who had expressed the most favourable opinions of the piece as a composition were even less sanguine than myself as to the probable event of the evening, and apprehended that it would terminate in their mortification and my own. They did not perceive the possibility of infusing such life into the character of its youthful hero, as would bring the whole fable

¹ Since this reference to the friends of my early professional life was written, Sir Edward Ryan has returned to his country to enjoy the just reward of his labours in the East with the dignity of a Privy Councillor, and the satisfaction of accepting with the honour attendant duties, which his judicial ability and experience peculiarly fit him to discharge. The other, Sir Benjamin Malkin, has been taken from this world in the prime of life, and in the fulness of his powers,—leaving with us the recollection of an intellect as masculine and as refined—of judgment and feeling as discriminating and just—and of social qualities as warm and as equable, as have ever passed, by the mysterious dispensation of Providence, from vigorous exercise into a memory and an example.

within the sphere of human sympathies; reconcile the audience to its machinery; and render that which seemed only consistent in its dreaminess, at once entire and real. Such was, however, unquestionably the effect of Mr. Macready's performance on that evening, which I believe, —in the judgment of many who cannot be influenced, like the author, by personal regard or individual gratitude,—was one of the most remarkable triumphs of art which have graced the stage within living memory. Although other of his performances were abstractedly greater, none I believe equalled this as an effort of art, estimated with reference to the nature of the materials which he animated, to difficulties which he subdued, and to the preconceptions which he charmed away. By the graces of beautiful elocution, he beguiled the audience to receive the drama as belonging to a range of associations which are no longer linked with the living world, but which retain an undying interest of a gentler cast, as a thing which *might have been*; and then, by his fearful power of making the fantastic real, he gradually rendered the whole possible—probable—true! The consequence of this extraordinary power of vivifying the frigid, and familiarising the remote, was to dissipate the fears of my friends; to render the play an object of attraction during the short remainder of the season; and to embolden others to attempt the part, and encourage other audiences to approve it, even when the power which first gave it sanction was wanting.

How little it was anticipated that the success of the first performance would justify its repetition, may be gathered from the prologue, which was spoken on that occasion by Mr. Serle, whose earnest and laborious pursuit of excellence as a dramatic poet from early youth I have watched with admiration; whose successes I have hailed with delight; and whose association with me in the night's venture is among its happiest recollections.

“What airy visions on a play's first night
Have flush'd refulgent *here* on poet's sight!
While emulous of glory's stainless wreath,
He felt 'the future in the instant' breathe;
Saw in the soften'd gleam of radiant eyes
The sacred tear through lids yet tearless rise;
Made to each fervid heart the great appeal
To bear him witness—stamp'd with living seal—
Of passion into forms of grandeur wrought,
Or grief by beauty tinged, or raised by thought:
As cordial hands their liberal boon conferr'd,
Fame's awful whisper in the distance heard,
Now shrunk from nicest fear, from fancied scorn,—
Now glow'd with hope for 'ages yet unborn.' ”

“With no such trembling sense of inward power
 Our author seeks to win his little hour,
 While to your transient glance, he dares unveil
 The feeble outlines of a Grecian tale.
 He boasts no magic skill your souls to draw
 Within the circle of Athenian awe;
 Where Fate on all things solemn beauty throws,
 And shapes heroic mourn in stern repose;
 Or to reveal the fane where genius tips
 With love's immortal lustre heavenly lips,
 Where airs divine yet breathe round forms so fair,
 That Time enamour'd has been charm'd to spare;
 Nor his the power which deeds of old imbues
 With present life, and tints with various hues;
 Casts glowing passion in heroic moulds,
 And makes young feelings burn 'neath ancient folds.
 Unlearn'd in arts like these, he seeks to cast
 One faint reflection from the glorious past;
 A narrow space his fond ambition bounds,—
 His little scenic life this evening rounds!

“O! if some image pure a moment play
 O'er the soul's mirror ere it pass away;
 If from some chance-sown thought a genial nerve
 Should, heart-strung, quicken virtue's cause to serve;
 Let these slight gifts the breath of kindness claim
 For one night's bubble on the sea of Fame,
 Which tempts no aid, which future praise insures,—
 But lives—glows—trembles—and expires in yours!”

The unhopèd-for prolongation of the dramatic life of Ion has not altered the opinion of its essential defects which I expressed in the original preface; but it has been delightful to me, not only because it has gratified an author's passionate desire for the embodiment of his work in theatrical action, but because it has induced a conviction that gentleness and self-sacrifice have charms for the multitude which neither the frigidity of a Greek plot, nor the feebleness of its development, nor manifold errors of composition, can destroy.

T. N. T.

London, 1852.

ION.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

The Interior of the Temple of Apollo, which is supposed to be placed on a rocky eminence overlooking the city of Argos.—Early morning.—The interior lighted by a single lamp suspended from the roof.—AGENOR resting against a column;—IRUS seated on a bench at the side of the scene.

AGENOR comes forward and speaks.

AGENOR. Will the dawn never visit us? These hours
Toil heavy with the unresting curse they bear
To do the work of desolating years!
All distant sounds are hush'd;—the shriek of death
And the survivors' wail are now unheard,
As grief had worn itself to patience. Irus!
I'm loth so soon to break thy scanty rest,
But my heart sickens for the tardy morn;
Is it not breaking?—speed and look—yet hold,
Know'st thou the fearful shelf of rock that hangs
Above the encroaching waves, the loftiest point
That stretches eastward?

IRUS. Know it? O full well!
There often have I bless'd the opening day,
Which thy free kindness gave me leave to waste
In happy wandering through the forests.

AGENOR. Well,
Thou art not then afraid to tread it; there

The earliest streak from the unrisen sun
Is to be welcomed;—tell me how it gleams,
In bloody portent or in saffron hope,
And hasten back to slumber.

IRUS. I shall hasten:
Believe not that thy summons broke my rest;
I was not sleeping.

[*Exit.*

AGENOR. Heaven be with thee, child!
His grateful mention of delights bestow'd
On that most piteous state of servile childhood
By liberal words chance-dropp'd, has touch'd a vein
Of feeling which I deem'd for ever numb'd,
And, by a gush of household memories, breaks
The icy casing of that thick despair
Which day by day has gather'd o'er my heart,
While, basely safe, within this column'd circle,
Uplifted far into the purer air
And by Apollo's partial love secured,
I have, in spirit, glided with the plague
As in foul darkness or in sickliest light
It wafted death through Argos; and mine ears,
Listening athirst for any human sound,
Have caught the dismal cry of confused pain,
Which to this dizzy height the fitful wind
Has borne from each sad quarter of the vale
Where life was.

Re-enter IRUS.

Are there signs of day-break?

IRUS.

None;

The eastern sky is still unbroken gloom.

AGENOR. It cannot surely be. Thine eyes are dim
(No fault of thine) for want of rest, or now

I look upon them near, with scalding tears.

Has care alighted on a head so young?

What grief hast thou been weeping?

IRUS.

Pardon me;

I never thought at such a mournful time

To plead my humble sorrow in excuse

Of feebly-render'd service: but my brother—

Thou mayst have noted him,—a sturdy lad,

With eye so merry and with foot so light

That none could chide his wildest moods—fell sick

But yesterday, and died in my weak arms

Ere I could seek for stouter aid: I hoped

That I had taught my grief to veil its signs

From thy observant care; but when I stood

Upon the well-known terrace where we loved,
 Arm link'd in arm, to watch the gleaming sails—
 His favourite pastime, for he burn'd to share
 A seaman's hardy lot,—my tears would flow,
 And I forgot to dry them. But I see
 Cleon is passing yonder; let me call him;
 For it must cheer thy heart to speak with him.

AGENOR. Call him, good youth, and then go in to sleep,
 Or, if thou wilt, to weep. [*Exit IRUS.*]

I envy thee
 The privilege, but Jupiter forefend
 That I should rob thee of it!

Enter CLEON.

CLEON. Hail, Agenor!
 Dark as our lot remains, 't is comfort yet
 To find thy age unstricken.

AGENOR. Rather mourn
 That I am destined still to linger here
 In strange unnatural strength, while death is round me.
 I chide these sinews that are framed so tough
 Grief cannot palsy them; I chide the air
 Which round this citadel of nature breathes
 With sweetness not of this world; I would share
 The common grave of my dear countrymen,
 And sink to rest while all familiar things,
 Old custom has endear'd are failing with me,
 Rather than shiver on in life behind them:
 Nor should these walls detain me from the paths
 Where death may be embraced, but that my word,
 In a rash moment plighted to our host,
 Forbids me to depart without his licence,
 Which firmly he refuses.

CLEON. Do not chide me
 If I rejoice to find the generous priest
 Strives, with Apollo's blessing, to preserve
 The treasure of thy wisdom;—nay, he trusts not
 To promises alone; his gates are barr'd
 Against thy egress:—none, indeed, may pass them
 Save the youth Ion, to whose earnest prayer
 His foster-father grants reluctant leave
 To visit the sad city at his will:
 And freely does he use the dangerous boon,
 Which, in my thought, the love that cherish'd him,
 Since he was found within the sacred grove,
 Smiling amidst the storm, a most rare infant,
 Should have had sternness to deny.

AGENOR.

What, Ion

The only inmate of this fane allow'd
To seek the mournful scenes where death is busy!—
Ion our sometime darling, whom we prized
As a stray gift, by bounteous Heaven dismiss'd
From some bright sphere which sorrow may not cloud
To make the happy happier! Is *he* sent
To grapple with the miseries of this time,
Whose nature such ethereal aspect wears
As it would perish at the touch of wrong?
By no internal contest is he train'd
For such hard duty; no emotions rude
Has his clear spirit vanquish'd;—Love, the germ
Of his mild nature, has spread graces forth,
Expanding with its progress, as the store
Of rainbow colour which the seed conceals
Sheds out its tints from its dim treasury,
To flush and circle in the flower. No tear
Has fill'd his eye save that of thoughtful joy
When, in the evening stillness, lovely things
Press'd on his soul too busily; his voice,
If, in the earnestness of childish sports,
Raised to the tone of anger, check'd its force,
As if it fear'd to break its being's law,
And falter'd into music; when the forms
Of guilty passion have been made to live
In pictured speech, and others have wax'd loud
In righteous indignation, he has heard
With sceptic smile, or from some slender vein
Of goodness, which surrounding gloom conceal'd,
Struck sunlight o'er it: so his life has flow'd
From its mysterious urn a sacred stream,
In whose calm depth the beautiful and pure
Alone are mirror'd; which, though shapes of ill
May hover round its surface, glides in light,
And takes no shadow from them.

CLEON.

Yet, methinks,

Thou hast not lately met him, or a change
Pass'd strangely on him had not miss'd thy wonder.
His form appears dilated; in those eyes
Where pleasure danced, a thoughtful sadness dwells;
Stern purpose knits the forehead, which till now
Knew not the passing wrinkle of a care:
Those limbs which in their heedless motion own'd
A stripling's playful happiness, are strung
As if the iron hardships of the camp
Had given them sturdy nurture; and his step,

Its airiness of yesterday forgotten,
Awakes the echoes of these desolate courts,
As if a hero of the ancient mould
Paced them in armour.

AGENOR. Hope is in thy tale.
This is no freak of nature's wayward course,
But work of pitying Heaven; for not in vain
The gods have pour'd into that guileless heart
The strengths that nerve the hero;—they are ours.

CLEON. How can he aid us? Can he stay the pulse
Of ebbing life,—arrest the infected winds,
Or smite the hungry spectre of the grave?

AGENOR. And dost thou think these breezes are our
foes,—
The innocent airs that used to dance around us,
As if they felt the blessings they convey'd,
Or that the death they bear is casual? No!
'Tis human guilt that blackens in the cloud,
Flashes athwart its mass in jagged fire,
Whirls in the hurricane, pollutes the air,
Turns all the joyous melodies of earth
To murmurings of doom. There is a foe
Who in the glorious summit of the state
Draws down the great resentment of the gods,
Whom he defies to strike us;—yet his power
Partakes that just infirmity which nature
Blends in the empire of her proudest sons—
That it is cased within a single breast,
And may be pluck'd thence by a single arm.
Let but that arm, selected by the gods,
Do its great office on the tyrant's life,
And Argos breathes again!

CLEON. A footstep!—hush!
Thy wishes, falling on a slavish ear,
Would tempt another outrage: 'tis a friend—
An honest though a crabbed one—Timocles:
Something hath ruffled him.—Good day, Timocles!

[TIMOCLES passes in front.]

He will not speak to us.

AGENOR. But he *shall* speak.
Timocles—nay then, thus I must enforce thee;
[Crossing him.]

Thou wilt not cast from thee a comrade's hand
That may be cold ere sunset.

TIMOCLES (*giving his hand*). Thou mayst school me;
Thy years and love have licence: but I own not
A stripling's mastery; is 't fit, Agenor?

AGENOR. Nay, thou must tell thy wrong; whate'er it
prove,

I hail thy anger as a hopeful sign,
For it revives the thought of household days,
When the small bickerings of friends had space
To fret, and death was not for ever nigh
To frown upon estrangement. What has moved thee?

TIMOCLES. I blush to tell it. Weary of the night
And of my life, I sought the western portal:
It open'd, when ascending from the stair
That through the rock winds spiral from the town,
Ion, the foundling cherish'd by the priest,
Stood in the entrance: with such mild command
As he has often smilingly obey'd,
I bade him stand aside and let me pass;
When—wouldst thou think it?—in determined speech
He gave me counsel to return; I press'd
Impatient onward: he, with honied phrase
His daring act excusing, grasp'd my arm
With strength resistless; led me from the gate;
Replaced its ponderous bars; and, with a look
As modest as he wore in childhood, left me.

AGENOR. And thou wilt thank him for it soon; he
comes—
Now hold thy angry purpose if thou canst!

Enter Ion.

ION. I seek thee, good Timocles, to implore
Again thy pardon. I am young in trust,
And fear lest, in the earnestness of love,
I stay'd thy course too rudely. Thou hast borne
My childish folly often,—do not frown
If I have ventured with unmanner'd zeal
To guard the ripe experience of years
From one rash moment's danger.

TIMOCLES. Leave thy care.
If I am weary of the flutterer life,
Is mortal bidding thus to cage it in?

ION. And art thou tired of being? Has the grave
No terrors for thee? Hast thou sunder'd quite
Those thousand meshes which old custom weaves
To bind us earthward, and gay fancy films
With airy lustre various? Hast subdued
Those cleavings of the spirit to its prison,
Those nice regards, dear habits, pensive memories,
That change the valour of the thoughtful breast
To brave dissimulation of its fears?

Is hope quench'd in thy bosom? Thou art free,
And in the simple dignity of man
Standest apart untempted:—do not lose
The great occasion thou hast pluck'd from misery,
Nor play the spendthrift with a great despair,
But use it nobly!

TIMOCLES. What, to strike? to slay?

ION. No!—not unless the audible voice of Heaven
Call thee to that dire office; but to shed
On ears abused by falsehood, truths of power
In words immortal,—not such words as flash
From the fierce demagogue's unthinking rage,
To madden for a moment and expire,—
Nor such as the rapt orator imbues
With warmth of facile sympathy, and moulds
To mirrors radiant with fair images,
To grace the noble fervour of an hour;—
But words which bear the spirits of great deeds
Wing'd for the future; which the dying breath
Of freedom's martyr shapes as it exhales,
And to the most enduring forms of earth
Commits—to linger in the craggy shade
Of the deep valley, 'neath the eagle's home,
Or in the sea-cave where the tempest sleeps,
Till some heroic leader bid them wake
To thrill the world with echoes!—But I talk
Of things above my grasp, which strangely press
Upon my soul, and tempt me to forget
The duties of my youth;—pray you forgive me.

TIMOCLES. Have I not said so?

AGENOR. Welcome to the morn!
The eastern gates unfold, the Priest approaches;
[As AGENOR speaks, the great gates at the back
of the scene open; the sea is discovered far
beneath,—the dawn breaking over it; MEDON,
the Priest, enters attended.]

And lo! the sun is struggling with the gloom,
Whose masses fill the eastern sky, and tints
Its edges with dull red;—but he *will* triumph;
Bless'd be the omen!

MEDON. God of light and joy,
Once more refresh us with thy healing beams!
If I may trace thy language in the clouds
That wait upon thy rising, help is nigh—
But help achieved in blood.

ION. Say'st thou in blood?

MEDON. Yes, Ion!—why, he sickens at the word,
Spite of his new-born strength;—the sights of woe
That he will seek have shed their paleness on him.
Has this night's walk shown more than common sorrow?

ION. I pass'd the palace where the frantic king
Yet holds his crimson revel, whence the roar
Of desperate mirth came mingling with the sigh
Of sturdy life just conquer'd, and the gleam
Of festal lamps 'mid spectral columns hung
Flaunting o'er shapes of anguish made them ghastlier.
How can I cease to tremble for the sad ones
He mocks—and him the wretchedest of all?

TIMOCLES. And canst thou pity him? Dost thou discern,
Amidst his impious darings, plea for him?

ION. Is he not childless, friendless, and a king?
He's human; and some pulse of good must live
Within his nature—have ye tried to wake it?

MEDON. Yes; I believe he felt our sufferings once;
When, at my strong entreaty, he despatch'd
Phocion my son to Delphos, there to seek
Our cause of sorrow; but, as time dragg'd on
Without his messenger's return, he grew
Impatient of all counsel,—to his palace
In awful mood retiring, wildly call'd
The reckless of his court to share his stores
And end all with him. When we dared disturb
His dreadful feastings with a humble prayer
That he would meet us, the poor slave, who bore
The message, flew back smarting from the scourge,
And mutter'd a decree that he who next
Unbidden met the tyrant's glance should die.

AGENOR. I am prepared to brave it.

CLEON. So am I.

TIMOCLES. And I—

ION. O Sages, do not think my prayer
Bespeaks unseemly forwardness—send me!
The coarsest reed that trembles in the marsh,
If Heaven select it for its instrument,
May shed celestial music on the breeze
As clearly as the pipe whose virgin gold
Befits the lip of Phœbus;—ye are wise;
And needed by your country; ye are fathers;
I am a lone stray thing, whose little life
By strangers' bounty cherish'd, like a wave
That from the summer's sea a wanton breeze

Lifts for a moment's sparkle, will subside
Light as it rose, nor leave a sigh in breaking.

MEDON. Ion, no sigh!

ION. Forgive me if I seem'd
To doubt that thou wilt mourn me if I fall;
Nor would I tax thy love with such a fear,
But that high promptings, which could never rise
Spontaneous in my nature, bid me plead
Thus boldly for the mission.

MEDON. My brave boy!
It shall be as thou wilt. I see thou art call'd
To this great peril, and I will not stay thee.
When wilt thou be prepared to seek it?

ION. Now.
Only before I go, thus, on my knee,
Let me in one word thank thee for a life
Made by thy love one cloudless holiday;
And O, my more than father, let me look
Up to thy face as if indeed a father's,
And give me a son's blessing!

MEDON. Bless thee, son!
I should be marble now; let's part at once.

ION. If I should not return, bless Phocion for me;
And, for Clemanthe—may I speak one word,
One parting word with my fair playfellow?

MEDON. If thou wouldst have it so, thou shalt.

ION. Farewell then!
Your prayers wait on my steps. The arm of Heaven
I feel in life or death will be around me. [*Exit.*]

MEDON. O grant it be in life! Let's to the sacrifice.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

An Apartment of the Temple.

Enter CLEMANTHE, followed by HABRA.

CLEMANTHE. Is he so changed?

HABRA. His bearing is so alter'd,
That, distant, I scarce knew him for himself;
But, looking in his face, I felt his smile
Gracious as ever, though its sweetness wore
Unwonted sorrow in it.

CLEMANTHE. He will go
To some high fortune, and forget us all,

Reclaim'd (be sure of it) by noble parents;
Me he forgets already; for five days,
Five melancholy days, I have not seen him.

HABRA. Thou knowest that he has privilege to range
The infected city; and, 't is said he spends
The hours of needful rest in squalid hovels
Where death is most forsaken.

CLEMANTHE. Why is this?
Why should my father, niggard of the lives
Of aged men, be prodigal of youth
So rich in glorious prophecy as his?

HABRA. He comes to answer for himself. I'll leave
you. [*Exit.*]

CLEMANTHE. Stay! Well my heart may guard its secret
best
By its own strength.

Enter ION.

ION. How fares my pensive sister?

CLEMANTHE. How should I fare but ill when the pale
hand
Draws the black foldings of the eternal curtain
Closer and closer round us—Phocion absent—
And thou, forsaking all within thy home,
Wilt risk thy life with strangers, in whose aid
Even thou canst do but little?

ION. It is little:
But in these sharp extremities of fortune,
The blessings which the weak and poor can scatter
Have their own season. 'T is a little thing
To give a cup of water; yet its draught
Of cool refreshment, drain'd by fever'd lips,
May give a shock of pleasure to the frame
More exquisite than when nectarean juice
Renews the life of joy in happiest hours.
It is a little thing to speak a phrase
Of common comfort which by daily use
Has almost lost its sense; yet on the ear
Of him who thought to die unmourn'd, 't will fall
Like choicest music; fill the glazing eye
With welcome tears; relax the knotted hand
To know the bonds of fellowship again;
And shed on the departing soul a sense,
More precious than the benison of friends
About the honour'd death-bed of the rich,
To him who else were lonely, that another
Of the same human mould is near and feels.

ION. Thou must not stay me; even thy father's love
Commends me to my mission.

CLEMANTHE. Can he do this?
I shall not bear his presence if thou fallest
By his consent; so shall I be alone.

ION. Phocion will soon return, and juster thoughts
Of thy admiring father close the gap
Thy old companion left behind him.

CLEMANTHE. Never!
What will to me be father, brother, friends,
When thou art gone—the light of our life quench'd—
Haunting like spectres of departed joy
The home where thou wert dearest?

ION. Thrill me not
With words that, in their agony, suggest
A hope too ravishing,—or my head will swim,
And my heart faint within me.

CLEMANTHE. Has my speech
Such blessed power? I will not mourn it then,
Though it hath told a secret I had borne
Till death in silence:—how affection grew
To this, I know not;—day succeeded day,
Each fraught with the same innocent delights,
Without one shock to ruffle the disguise
Of sisterly regard which thinly veil'd it,
Till thy changed mien reveal'd it to my soul,
And thy great peril makes me bold to tell it.
Do not despise it in me!

ION. With deep joy
Thus I receive it. Trust me, it is long
Since I have learn'd to tremble 'midst our pleasures,
Lest I should break the golden dream around me
With most ungrateful rashness. I should bless
The sharp and perilous duty which hath press'd
A life's deliciousness into these moments,—
Which here must end. I came to say farewell,
And the word must be said.

CLEMANTHE. Thou canst not mean it!
Have I disclaimed all maiden bashfulness,
To tell the cherish'd secret of my soul
To my soul's master, and in rich return
Obtain'd the clear assurance of his love,
To hear him speak that miserable word
I cannot—will not echo?

ION. Heaven has call'd me,
And I have pledged my honour. When thy heart
Bestow'd its preference on a friendless boy,

Thou didst not image him a recreant; nor
 Must he prove so, by thy election crown'd.
 Thou hast endow'd me with a right to claim
 Thy help through this our journey, be its course
 Lengthen'd to age, or in an hour to end;
 And now I ask it!—bid my courage hold,
 And with thy free approval send me forth
 In soul apparell'd for my office!

CLEMANTHE.

Go!

I would not have thee other than thou art,
 Living or dying—and if thou shouldst fall—

ION. Be sure I shall return.

CLEMANTHE.

If thou shouldst fall,

I shall be happier as the affianced bride
 Of thy cold ashes, than in proudest fortunes—
 Thine—ever thine—

[*She faints in his arms.*]

ION (*calls*).

Habra!—So best to part—

Enter HABRA.

Let her have air; be near her through the day;
 I know thy tenderness—should ill news come
 Of any friend, she will require it all.

[*HABRA bears CLEMANTHE out.*]

Ye gods, that have enrich'd the life ye claim
 With priceless treasure, strengthen me to yield it!

[*Exit.*]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A Terrace of the Palace.

ADRASTUS, CRYTHES.

ADRASTUS. The air breathes freshly after our long
 night
 Of glorious revelry. I'll walk awhile.

CRYTHES. It blows across the town; dost thou not fear
 It bear infection with it?

ADRASTUS. Fear! dost talk
Of fear to me? I deem'd even thy poor thoughts
Had better scann'd their master. Prithee tell me
In what act, word, or look, since I have borne
Thy converse here, hast thou discern'd such baseness
As makes thee bold to prate to me of fear?

CRYTHES. My liege, of human might all know thee
fearless;
But may not heroes shun the elements
When sickness taints them?

ADRASTUS. Let them blast me now!—
I stir not! tremble not; these massive walls,
Whose date o'erawes tradition, gird the home
Of a great race of kings, along whose line
The eager mind lives aching, through the darkness
Of ages else unstoried, till its shapes
Of armèd sovereigns spread to godlike port,
And, frowning in the uncertain dawn of time,
Strike awe, as powers that ruled an elder world,
In mute obedience. I, sad heritor
Of all their glories, feel our doom is nigh;
And I will meet it as befits their fame:
Nor will I vary my selected path
The breadth of my sword's edge, nor check a wish,
If such unkingly yielding might avert it.

CRYTHES. Thou art ever royal in thy thoughts.

ADRASTUS. No more—
I would be private. [Exit CRYTHES.

Grovelling parasite!
Why should I waste these fate-environ'd hours,
And pledge my great defiance to despair
With flatterers such as thou!—as if my joys
Required the pale reflections cast by slaves
In mirror'd mockery round my throne, or lack'd
The aid of reptile sympathies to stream
Through fate's black pageantry? Let weakness seek
Companionship: I'll henceforth feast alone.

Enter a Soldier.

SOLDIER. My liege, forgive me,—

ADRASTUS. Well! Speak out at once
Thy business, and retire.

SOLDIER. I have no part
In the presumptuous message that I bear.

ADRASTUS. Tell it, or go. There is no time to waste
On idle terrors.

SOLDIER. Thus it is, my lord:
 As we were burnishing our arms, a man
 Enter'd the court, and when we saw him first
 Was tending towards the palace; in amaze,
 We hail'd the rash intruder; still he walk'd
 Unheeding onward, till the western gate
 Barr'd further course; then turning, he besought
 Our startled band to herald him to thee,
 That he might urge a message which the sages
 Had charged him to deliver.

ADRASTUS. Ah! the graybeards
 Who, 'mid the altars of the gods, conspire
 To cast the image of supernal power
 From earth its shadow consecrates. What sage
 Is so resolved to play the orator
 That he would die for't?

SOLDIER. He is but a youth,
 Yet urged his prayer with a sad constancy
 Which could not be denied.

ADRASTUS. Most bravely plann'd!
 Sedition worthy of the reverend host
 Of sophist traitors; brave to scatter fancies
 Of discontent 'midst sturdy artizans,
 Whose honest sinews they direct unseen,
 And make their proxies in the work of peril!
 'Tis fit, when burning to insult their king,
 And warn'd the pleasure must be bought with life,
 Their valour send a boy to speak their wisdom!
 Thou know'st my last decree; tell this rash youth
 The danger he incurs;—then let him pass,
 And own the king more gracious than his masters.

SOLDIER. We have already told him of the fate
 Which waits his daring; courteously he thank'd us,
 But still with solemn accent urged his suit.

ADRASTUS. Tell him once more, if he persists he dies—
 Then, if he will, admit him. Should he hold
 His purpose, order Crythes to conduct him,
 And see the headsman instantly prepare
 To do his office. [Exit SOLDIER.]

So resolved so young—
 'T were pity he should fall; yet he *must* fall,
 Or the great sceptre which hath sway'd the fears
 Of ages, will become a common staff
 For youth to wield, or age to rest upon,
 Despoil'd of all its virtues. He *must* fall,
 Else they who prompt the insult will grow bold,
 And with their pestilent vauntings through the city

Raise the low fog of murky discontent,
Which now creeps harmless through its marshy birth-
place,
To veil my setting glories. He is warn'd;
And if he cross yon threshold he shall die.

Enter CRYTHES and ION.

CRYTHES. The king!

ADRASTUS. Stranger, I bid thee welcome;
We are about to tread the same dark passage,
Thou almost on the instant.—(*To CRYTHES.*) Is the sword
Of justice sharpen'd, and the headsman ready?

CRYTHES. Thou may'st behold them plainly in the
court;
Even now the solemn soldiers line the ground,
The steel gleams on the altar, and the slave
Disrobes himself for duty.

ADRASTUS (*to ION*). Dost thou see them!

ION. I do.

ADRASTUS. By Heaven, he does not change!
If, even now, thou wilt depart and leave
Thy traitorous thoughts unspoken, thou art free.

ION. I thank thee for thy offer; but I stand
Before thee for the lives of thousands, rich
In all that makes life precious to the brave;
Who perish not alone, but in their fall
Break the far-spreading tendrils that they feed,
And leave them nurtureless. If thou wilt hear me
For them, I am content to speak no more.

ADRASTUS. Thou hast thy wish then. Crythes! till yon
dial
Shall cast its shadow on the approaching hour,
I'll hear this gallant traitor. On the instant,
Come without word, and lead him to his doom.
Now leave us.

CRYTHES. What, alone?

ADRASTUS. Yes, slave, alone.
He is no assassin! [*Exit CRYTHES.*

Tell me who thou art.

What generous source owns that heroic blood,
Which holds its course thus bravely? What great wars
Have nursed the courage that can look on death,
Certain and speedy death, with placid eye?

ION. I am a simple youth who never bore
The weight of armour,—one who may not boast
Of noble birth or valour of his own.

Deem not the powers which nerve me thus to speak
In thy great presence, and have made my heart
Upon the verge of bloody death as calm,
As equal in its beatings, as when sleep
Approach'd me nestling from the sportive toils
Of thoughtless childhood, and celestial forms
Began to glimmer through the deepening shadows
Of soft oblivion, to belong to me!—
These are the strengths of Heaven; to thee they speak,
Bid thee to hearken to thy people's cry,
Or warn thee that thy hour must shortly come!

ADRASTUS. I know it must; so may'st thou spare thy
warnings.

The envious gods in me have doom'd a race,
Whose glories stream from the same cloud-girt founts,
Whence their own dawned upon the infant world;
And I shall sit on my ancestral throne
To meet their vengeance; but till then I rule
As I have ever ruled, and thou wilt feel.

ION. I will not further urge thy safety to thee;
It may be, as thou say'st, too late; nor seek
To make thee shudder at the gathering curse
Which shall burst forth in mockery at thy fall;
But thou art gifted with a nobler sense—
I know thou art my sovereign!—sense of pain
Endured by myriad Argives, in whose souls,
And in whose fathers' souls, thou and thy fathers
Have kept their regal state; whose heartstrings, still
The living fibres of thy rooted power,
Quiver with agonies thy crimes have drawn
From heavenly justice on them.

ADRASTUS. How! my crimes?

ION. Yes; 'tis the eternal law, that where guilt is,
Sorrow shall answer it; and thou hast not
A poor man's privilege to bear alone,
Or in the narrow circle of his kinsmen,
The penalties of evil, for in thine
A nation's fate lies circled.—King Adrastus!
Steel'd as thy heart is with the usages
Of pomp and power, a few short summers since
Thou wert a child, and canst not be relentless.
Oh, if maternal love embraced thee then,
Think of the mothers who with eyes unwet
Glare o'er their perishing children: hast thou shared
The glow of a first friendship, which is born
'Midst the rude sports of boyhood, think of youth

Smitten amidst its playthings;—let the spirit
Of thy own innocent childhood whisper pity!

ADRASTUS. In every word thou dost but steel my
soul.

My youth was blasted;—parents, brother, kin—
All that should people infancy with joy—
Conspired to poison mine; despoil'd my life
Of innocence and hope—all but the sword
And sceptre—dost thou wonder at me now?

ION. I knew that we should pity—

ADRASTUS. Pity! dare
To speak that word again, and torture waits thee!
I am yet king of Argos. Well, go on—
Thy time is short, and I am pledged to hear.

ION. If thou hast ever loved——

ADRASTUS. Beware! beware!

ION. Thou hast! I see thou hast! Thou art not
marble,
And thou shalt hear me!—Think upon the time
When the clear depths of thy yet lucid soul
Were ruffled with the troublings of strange joy,
As if some unseen visitant from heaven
Touch'd the calm lake and wreath'd its images
In sparkling waves;—recall the dallying hope
That on the margin of assurance trembled,
As loth to lose in certainty too bless'd
Its happy being;—taste in thought again
Of the stolen sweetness of those evening-walks,
When pansied turf was air to winged feet,
And circling forests, by ethereal touch
Enchanted, wore the livery of the sky,
As if about to melt in golden light
Shapes of one heavenly vision; and thy heart,
Enlarged by its new sympathy with one,
Grew bountiful to all!

ADRASTUS. That tone! that tone!
Whence came it? from thy lips? It cannot be—
The long-hush'd music of the only voice
That ever spake unbought affection to me,
And waked my soul to blessing!—O sweet hours
Of golden joy, ye come! your glories break
Through my pavilion'd spirit's sable folds!
Roll on! roll on!—Stranger, thou dost enforce me
To speak of things unbreathed by lip of mine
To human ear:—wilt listen?

ION. As a child.

ADRASTUS. Again!—that voice again!—thou hast seen
me moved

As never mortal saw me, by a tone
Which some light breeze, enamour'd of the sound,
Hath wafted through the woods, till thy young voice
Caught it to rive and melt me. At my birth
This city, which, expectant of its prince,
Lay hush'd, broke out in clamorous ecstasies;
Yet, in that moment, while the uplifted cups
Foam'd with the choicest product of the sun,
And welcome thunder'd from a thousand throats,
My doom was seal'd. From the hearth's vacant space,
In the dark chamber where my mother lay,
Faint with the sense of pain-bought happiness,
Came forth, in heart-appalling tone, these words
Of me the nurseling—"Woe unto the babe!
"Against the life which now begins shall life,
"Lighted from thence, be arm'd, and, both soon quench'd,
"End this great line in sorrow!"—Ere I grew
Of years to know myself a thing accurs'd,
A second son was born, to steal the love
Which fate had else scarce rifled: he became
My parents' hope, the darling of the crew
Who lived upon their smiles, and thought it flattery
To trace in every foible of my youth—
A prince's youth! the workings of the curse;
My very mother—Jove! I cannot bear
To speak it now—look'd freezingly upon me!

ION. But thy brother —

ADRASTUS. Died. Thou hast heard the lie,
The common lie that every peasant tells
Of me his master,—that I slew the boy.
'Tis false! One summer's eve, below a crag
Which, in his wilful mood, he strove to climb,
He lay a mangled corpse: the very slaves,
Whose cruelty had shut him from my heart,
Now coin'd their own injustice into proofs
To brand me as his murderer.

ION. Did they dare
Accuse thee?

ADRASTUS. Not in open speech:—they felt
I should have seized the miscreant by the throat,
And crush'd the lie half-spoken with the life
Of the base speaker:—but the tale look'd out
From the stolen gaze of coward eyes, which shrank
When mine have met them; murmur'd through the crowd
That at the sacrifice, or feast, or game,

Stood distant from me; burnt into my soul
When I beheld it in my father's shudder!

ION. Didst not declare thy innocence?

ADRASTUS. To whom?

To parents who could doubt me? To the ring
Of grave impostors, or their shallow sons,
Who should have studied to prevent my wish
Before it grew to language; hail'd my choice
To service as a prize to wrestle for;
And whose reluctant courtesy I bore,
Pale with proud anger, till from lips compress'd
The blood has started! To the common herd,
The vassals of our ancient house, the mass
Of bones and muscles framed to till the soil
A few brief years, then rot unnamed beneath it,
Or, deck'd for slaughter at their master's call,
To smite and to be smitten, and lie crush'd
In heaps to swell his glory or his shame?
Answer to them? No! though my heart had burst,
As it was nigh to bursting!—To the mountains
I fled, and on their pinnacles of snow
Breasted the icy wind, in hope to cool
My spirit's fever—struggled with the oak
In search of weariness, and learn'd to rive
Its stubborn boughs, till limbs once lightly strung,
Might mate in cordage with its infant stems;
Or on the sea-beat rock tore off the vest
Which burnt upon my bosom, and to air
Headlong committed, clove the water's depth
Which plummet never sounded;—but in vain.

ION. Yet succour came to thee?

ADRASTUS. A blessed one!

Which the strange magic of thy voice revives,
And thus unlocks my soul. My rapid steps
Were in a wood-encircled valley stay'd
By the bright vision of a maid, whose face
Most lovely more than loveliness reveal'd
In touch of patient grief, which dearer seem'd
Than happiness to spirit sear'd like mine.
With feeble hands she strove to lay in earth
The body of her aged sire, whose death
Left her alone. I aided her sad work,
And soon two lonely ones by holy rites
Became one happy being. Days, weeks, months,
In streamlike unity flow'd silent by us
In our delightful nest. My father's spies—
Slaves, whom my nod should have consign'd to stripes

Or the swift falchion—track'd our sylvan home
Just as my bosom knew its second joy,
And, spite of fortune, I embraced a son.

ION. Urged by thy trembling parents to avert
That dreadful prophecy?

ADRASTUS. Fools! did they deem
Its worst accomplishment could match the ill
Which they wrought on me? It had left unharm'd
A thousand ecstasies of passion'd years,
Which, tasted once, live ever, and disdain
Fate's iron grapple! Could I now behold
That son with knife uplifted at my heart,
A moment ere my life-blood follow'd it,
I would embrace him with my dying eyes,
And pardon destiny! While jocund smiles
Wreathed on the infant's face, as if good spirits
Suggested pleasant fancies to its soul,
The ruffians broke upon us; seized the child;
Dash'd through the thicket to the beetling rock
'Neath which the deep sea eddies; I stood still
As stricken into stone: I heard him cry,
Press'd by the rudeness of the murderer's gripe,
Severer ill unfearing—then the splash
Of waters that shall cover him for ever;
And could not stir to save him!

ION. And the mother——

ADRASTUS. She spake no word, but clasp'd me in her
arms,
And then laid down to die. A lingering gaze
Of love she fix'd on me—none other loved,
And so pass'd hence. By Jupiter, her look!
Her dying patience glimmers in thy face!
She lives again! She looks upon me now!
There's magic in't. Bear with me—I am childish.

Enter CRYTHES and Guards.

ADRASTUS. Why art thou here?

CRYTHES. The dial points the hour.

ADRASTUS. Dost thou not see that horrid purpose pass'd?
Hast thou no heart—no sense?

CRYTHES. Scarce half an hour
Hath flown since the command on which I wait.

ADRASTUS. Scarce half an hour!—years—years have
roll'd since then.

Begone! remove that pageantry of death—
It blasts my sight—and hearken! Touch a hair
Of this brave youth, or look on him as now

With thy cold headsman's eye, and yonder band
Shall not expect a fearful show in vain.
Hence! without a word. *[Exit CRYTHES.]*

What wouldst thou have me do?

ION. Let thy awaken'd heart speak its own language;
Convene thy sages;—frankly, nobly meet them;
Explore with them the pleasure of the gods,
And, whatsoe'er the sacrifice, perform it.

ADRASTUS. Well! I will seek their presence in an
hour;
Go summon them, young hero: hold! no word
Of the strange passion thou hast witness'd here.

ION. Distrust me not—Propitious gods, I bless you!
[Exit.]

ADRASTUS. Yet stay—he's gone—his spell is on me
yet;

What have I promised him? To meet the men
Who from my living head would strip the crown,
And sit in judgment on me?—I must do it—
Yet shall my band be ready to o'erawe
The course of liberal speech, and if it rise
So as too loudly to offend mine ear,
Strike the rash brawler dead!—What idle dream
Of long-past days had melted me? It fades—
It vanishes—I am again a king!

SCENE II.

The Interior of the Temple.

(Same as ACT I. SCENE I.)

CLEMANTHE *seated*—HABRA *attending her*.

HABRA. Look, dearest lady!—the thin smoke aspires
In the calm air, as when in happier times
It show'd the gods propitious: wilt thou seek
Thy chamber, lest thy father and his friends,
Returning, find us hinderers of their council?
She answers not—she hearkens not—with joy
Could I believe her, for the first time sullen!
Still she is rapt.

Enter AGENOR.

O speak to my sweet mistress;
Haply thy voice may rouse her.

AGENOR.

Dear Clemanthe,

Hope dawns in every omen; we shall taste
Old household joys again.

Enter MEDON, CLEON, TIMOCLES, and others.

MEDON. Clemanthe here!
How sad! how pale!

HABRA. Her eye is kindling—hush!

CLEON. Hark! hear ye not a distant footstep?

MEDON. No.
Look round, my fairest child; thy friends are near thee.

CLEON. Yes!—now 't is lost—'t is on that endless stair—
Nearer and more distinct—'t is his—'t is his—
He lives! he comes!

[CLEMANTHE rises and rushes to the back of the stage, at which ION appears, and returns with her.]

Here is your messenger,
Whom Heaven has rescued from the tyrant's rage
Ye sent him forth to brave. Rejoice, old men,
That ye are guiltless of his blood!—why pause ye?
Why shout ye not his welcome?

MEDON. Dearest girl,
This is no scene for thee; go to thy chamber;
I'll come to thee ere long.

[Exeunt CLEMANTHE and HABRA.]

She is o'erwrought
By fear and joy for one whose infant hopes
Were mingled with her own, even as a brother's.

TIMOCLES. Ion!
How shall we do thee honour?

ION. None is due
Save to the gods whose gracious influence sways
The king ye deem'd relentless;—he consents
To meet ye presently in council:—speed!
This may be virtue's latest rally in him,
In fitful strength, ere it be quench'd for ever!

MEDON. Haste to your seats; I will but speak a word
With our brave friend, and follow: though convened
In speed, let our assembly lack no forms
Of due observance, which to furious power
Plead with the silent emphasis of years.

[Exeunt all but MEDON and ION.]

Ion, draw near me; this eventful day
Hath shown thy nature's graces circled round
With firmness which accomplishes the hero;—
And it would bring to me but one proud thought—
That virtues which required not culture's aid

Shed their first fragrance 'neath my roof, and there
 Found shelter;—but it also hath reveal'd
 What I may not hide from thee, that my child,
 My blithe and innocent girl—more fair in soul,
 More delicate in fancy than in mould—
 Loves thee with other than a sister's love.
 I should have cared for this: I vainly deem'd
 A fellowship in childhood's thousand joys
 And household memories had nurtured friendship
 Which might hold peaceful empire in the soul;
 But in that guise the traitor hath stolen in,
 And the fair citadel is thine.

ION. 'Tis true.
 I did not think the nurseling of thy house
 Could thus disturb its holiest inmate's duty
 With tale of selfish passion;—but we met
 As playmates who might never meet again,
 And then the hidden truth flash'd forth, and show'd
 To each the image in the other's soul
 In one bright instant.

MEDON. Be that instant blest!

Enter CTESIPHON.

MEDON. Art come to chide me to the council?

CTESIPHON. No;
 To bring unwonted joy; thy son approaches.

MEDON. Thank Heaven! Hast spoken with him? Is
 he well?

CTESIPHON. I strove in vain to reach him, for the
 crowd,
 Roused from the untended couch and dismal hearth
 By the strange visiting of hope, press'd round him;
 But, by his head erect and fiery glance,
 I know that he is well, and that he bears
 A message which shall shake the tyrant. (*Shouts.*) See!
 The throng is tending this way—now it parts,
 And yields him to thy arms.

Enter PHOCION.

MEDON. Welcome, my Phocion—
 Hast brought the answer of the god?

PHOCION. I have:
 Now let Adrastus tremble!

MEDON. May we hear it?

PHOCION. I am sworn first to utter it to him.

CTESIPHON. But it is fatal to him!—Say but that!

PHOCION. Ha, Ctesiphon!—I mark'd thee not before.
How fares thy father?

ION (*to* PHOCION). Do not speak of him.

CTESIPHON (*overhearing* ION). Not speak of him! Dost
think there is a moment
When common things eclipse the burning thought
Of him and vengeance?

PHOCION. Has the tyrant's sword—

CTESIPHON. No, Phocion; that were merciful and brave,
Compared to his base deed; yet will I tell it
To make the flashing of thine eye more deadly,
And edge thy words that they may rive his heartstrings.
The last time that Adrastus dared to face
The sages of the state, although my father,
Yielding to nature's mild decay, had left
All worldly toil and hope, he gather'd strength,
In his old seat, to speak one word of warning.
Thou know'st how bland with years his wisdom grew,
And how with language, steep'd in love, he sheathed
The sharpness of rebuke; yet, ere his speech
Was closed, the tyrant started from his throne,
And with his base hand smote him; 't was his death-
stroke;

The old man totter'd home, and only once
Raised his head after!

PHOCION. Thou wert absent? Yes!
The heartless tyrant lives!

CTESIPHON. Had I beheld
That sacrilege, Adrastus had lain dead,
Or I had been torn piecemeal by his minions.
But I was far away: when I return'd,
I found my father on the nearest bench
Within our door, his thinly silver'd head
Supported by wan hands, which hid his face
And would not be withdrawn;—no groan, no sigh
Was audible, and we could only learn
By short convulsive tremblings of his frame
That life still flicker'd in it—yet at last,
By some unearthly inspiration roused,
He dropp'd his wither'd hands, and sat erect
As in his manhood's glory—the free blood
Flush'd crimson through his cheeks, his furrow'd brow
Expanded clear, and his eyes opening full
Gleam'd with a youthful fire;—I fell in awe
Upon my knees before him—still he spake not,
But slowly raised his arm untrembling; clench'd
His hand as if it grasp'd an airy knife,

And struck in air: my hand was joined with his
In nervous grasp—my lifted eye met his
In steadfast gaze—my pressure answer'd his—
We knew at once each other's thought; a smile
Of the old sweetness play'd upon his lips,
And life forsook him. Weaponless I flew
To seek the tyrant, and was driven with scoffs
From the proud gates which shelter him. He lives—
And I am here to babble of revenge!

PHOCION. It comes, my friend—attend me to the king!

ION. Even while we speak, Adrastus meets his council;
There let us seek him: should ye find him touch'd
With penitence, as happily ye may,
O give allowance to his soften'd nature!

CTESIPHON. Show grace to him!—Dost dare?—I had
forgot,

Thou dost not know how a son loves a father!

ION. I know enough to feel for thee; I know
Thou hast endured the vilest wrong that tyranny
In its worst frenzy can inflict;—yet think,
O think! before the irrevocable deed
Shuts out all thought, how much of power's excess
Is theirs who raise the idol:—do we groan
Beneath the personal force of this rash man,
Who forty summers since hung at the breast
A playful weakling; whom the heat unnerves;
The north wind pierces; and the hand of death
Will, in a moment, change to clay as vile
As that of the scourged slave whose chains it severs?
No! 'tis our weakness gasping for the shows
Of outward strength that builds up tyranny,
And makes it look so glorious:—If we shrink
Faint-hearted from the reckoning of our span
Of mortal days, we pamper the fond wish
For long duration by a line of kings:
If the rich pageantry of thoughts must fade
All unsubstantial as the regal hues
Of eve which purpled them, our cunning frailty
Must clothe a living image with their pomp,
And wreathe a diadem around its brow,
In which our sunny fantasies may live
Empearl'd, and gleam, in fatal splendour, far
On after ages. We must look *within*
For that which makes us slaves:—on sympathies
Which find no kindred objects in the plain
Of common life—affections that aspire
In air too thin—and fancy's dewy film

Floating for rest; for even such delicate threads,
Gather'd by Fate's engrossing hand, supply
The eternal spindle whence she weaves the bond
Of cable strength in which our nature struggles!

CTESIPHON. Go talk to others, if thou wilt;—to me
All argument, save that of steel, is idle.

MEDON. No more:—let's seek the council—there,
my son,
Tell thy great message nobly;—and for thee,
Poor orphan'd youth, be sure the gods are just!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

The great Square of the City.

ADRASTUS *seated on a throne*; AGENOR, TIMOCLES, CLEON,
and others, *seated as Councillors*—Soldiers *line the*
stage at a distance.

ADRASTUS. Upon your summons, Sages, I am here;
Your king attends to know your pleasure; speak it!

AGENOR. And canst thou ask? If the heart dead
within thee
Receives no impress of this awful time,
Art thou of sense forsaken? Are thine ears
So charm'd by strains of slavish minstrelsy,
That the dull groan and frenzy-pointed shriek
Pass them unheard to Heaven? Or are thine eyes
So conversant with prodigies of grief,
They cease to dazzle at them? Art thou arm'd
'Gainst wonder, while, in all things, nature turns
To dreadful contraries;—while youth's full cheek
Is shrivell'd into furrows of sad years,
And 'neath its glossy curls untinged by care
Looks out a keen anatomy;—while age
Is stung by feverish torture for an hour
Into youth's strength; while fragile womanhood
Starts into frightful courage, all unlike
The gentle strength its gentle weakness feeds
To make affliction beautiful, and stalks
Abroad, a tearless and unshuddering thing;—
While childhood, in its orphan'd freedom blithe,
Finds, in its shapes of wretchedness which seem
Grotesque to its unsadden'd vision, cause
For dreadful mirth that shortly shall be hush'd
In never-broken silence; and while love,
Immortal through all change, makes ghastly death

Its idol, and with furious passion digs
Amid sepulchral images for gauds
To cheat its fancy with?—Do sights like these
Glare through the realm thou shouldst be parent to,
And canst thou find the voice to ask “our pleasure?”

ADRASTUS. Cease, babbler!—wherefore would you stun
my ears

With vain recital of the griefs I know,
And cannot heal?—will treason turn aside
The shaft of death, or soften nature’s ills?
I have no skill to heal the sick, nor power
To sway the elements.

AGENOR. Thou hast the power
To cast thyself upon the earth with us
In penitential shame; or, if this power
Has left a heart made weak by luxury
And hard by pride, thou hast at least the power
To spare the mockery of thy frantic revels.

ADRASTUS. I have yet power to punish insult—look
I use it not, Agenor!—Fate may dash
My sceptre from me, but shall not command
My will to hold it with a feebler grasp;
Nay, if few hours of empire yet are mine,
They shall be colour’d with a sterner pride,
And peopled with more lustrous joys, than flush’d
In the serene procession of its greatness,
Which look’d perpetual, as the flowing course
Of human things. Have ye beheld a pine
That clasp’d the mountain-summit with a root
As firm as its rough marble, and, apart
From the huge shade of undistinguish’d trees,
Lifted its head, as in delight, to share
The evening glories of the sky, and taste
The wanton dalliance of the heavenly breeze
That no ignoble vapour from the vale
Could mingle with—smit by the flaming marl,
And lighted for destruction? How it stood
One glorious moment, fringed and wreathed with fire
Which show’d the inward graces of its shape,
Uncumber’d now, and midst its topmost boughs,
That young ambition’s airy fancies made
Their giddy nest, leap’d sportive;—never clad
By liberal summer in a pomp so rich
As waited on its downfall, while it took
The storm-cloud roll’d behind it for a curtain
To gird its splendours round, and made the blast
Its minister to whirl its flashing shreds

Aloft towards heaven, or to the startled depths
Of forests that afar might share its doom!
So shall the royalty of Argos pass
In festal blaze to darkness! Have ye spoken?

AGENOR. I speak no more to thee!—Great Jove, look
down!

[Shouting without.]

ADRASTUS. What factious brawl is this?—Disperse it,
soldiers.

*[Shouting renewed—As some of the Soldiers are
about to march, PHOCION rushes in, followed
by CTESIPHON, ION, and MEDON.]*

Whence is this insolent intrusion?

PHOCION. King!

I bear Apollo's answer to thy prayer.

ADRASTUS. Has not thy travel taught thy knee its
duty?

Here we had school'd thee better.

PHOCION. Kneel to thee!

MEDON. Patience, my son! Do homage to the king.

PHOCION. Never!—thou talk'st of schooling—know,
Adrastus,

That I have studied in a nobler school
Than the dull haunt of venal sophistry
Or the lewd guard-room; o'er which ancient heaven
Extends its arch for all, and mocks the span
Of palaces and dungeons; where the heart
In its free beatings, 'neath the coarsest vest,
Claims kindred with diviner things than power
Of kings can raise or stifle—in the school
Of mighty nature—where I learn'd to blush
At sight like this, of thousands basely hush'd
Before a man no mightier than themselves,
Save in the absence of that love that softens.

ADRASTUS. Peace! speak thy message.

PHOCION. Shall I tell it here?

Or shall I seek thy couch at dead of night,
And breathe it in low whisper?—As thou wilt.

ADRASTUS. Here—and this instant!

PHOCION. Hearken then, Adrastus,
And hearken, Argives—thus Apollo speaks:—

[Reads a scroll.]

“Argos ne'er shall find release
Till her monarch's race shall cease.”

ADRASTUS. 'Tis not God's will, but man's sedition
speaks:—

Guards! tear that lying parchment from his hands,
And bear him to the palace.

MEDON. Touch him not,—
He is Apollo's messenger, whose lips
Were never stain'd with falsehood.

PHOCION. Come on, all!

AGENOR. Surround him, friends! Die with him!

ADRASTUS. Soldiers, charge
Upon these rebels; hew them down. On, on!

[*The Soldiers advance and surround the People;
they seize PHOCION. ION rushes from the back
of the stage, and throws himself between
ADRASTUS and PHOCION.*

PHOCION (*to ADRASTUS*). Yet I defy thee.

ION (*to PHOCION*). Friend! for sake of all,
Enrage him not—wait while I speak a word—
(*To ADRASTUS*) My sovereign, I implore thee, do not
stain
This sacred place with blood; in Heaven's great name
I do conjure thee—and in *hers*, whose shade
Is mourning for thee now!

ADRASTUS. Release the stripling—
He is not worth my anger. To the palace!

ION. Nay, hold an instant!—let my speech have power
From Heaven to move thee further: thou hast heard
The sentence of the god, and thy heart owns it;
If thou wilt cast aside this cumbrous pomp,
And in seclusion purify thy soul
Long fever'd and sophisticate, the gods
May give thee space for penitential thoughts;
If not—as surely as thou standest here,
Wilt thou lie stiff and weltering in thy blood—
The vision presses on me now.

ADRASTUS. Art mad?
Resign my state? Sue to the gods for life,
The common life which every slave endures,
And meanly clings to? No; within yon walls
I shall resume the banquet, never more
Broken by man's intrusion. Councillors,
Farewell!—go mutter treason till ye perish!

[*Exeunt ADRASTUS, CRYTHES, and Soldiers.*

ION (*who stands apart leaning on a pedestal*). 'Tis
seal'd!

MEDON. Let us withdraw, and strive
By sacrifice to pacify the gods!

[MEDON, AGENOR, and Councillors, retire: they
leave CTESIPHON, PHOCION, and ION. ION still
stands apart as rapt in meditation.]

CTESIPHON. 'Tis well: the measure of his guilt is
fill'd.

Where shall we meet at sunset?

PHOCION. In the grove,
Which with its matted shade imbrowns the vale,
Between those buttresses of rock that guard
The sacred mountain on its western side,
Stands a rude altar—overgrown with moss,
And stain'd with drippings of a million showers,
So old, that no tradition names the power
That hallow'd it,—which we will consecrate
Anew to freedom and to justice.

CTESIPHON. Thither
Will I bring friends to meet thee. Shall we speak
To yon rapt youth? [Pointing to ION.]

PHOCION. His nature is too gentle.
At sunset we will meet.—With arms?

CTESIPHON. A knife—
One sacrificial knife will serve.

PHOCION. At sunset!

[Exeunt CTESIPHON and PHOCION severally. ION
comes forward.]

ION. O wretched King, thy words have seal'd thy
doom!

Why should I shiver at it, when no way,
Save this, remains to break the ponderous cloud
That hangs above my wretched country?—death—
A single death, the common lot of all,
Which it will not be mine to look upon,—
And yet its ghastly shape dilates before me;
I cannot shut it out; my thoughts grow rigid,
And as one grim and prostrate figure haunts them,
My sinews stiffen like it. Courage, Ion!
No spectral form is here; all outward things
Wear their own old familiar looks: no dye
Pollutes them. Yet the air has scent of blood,
And now it eddies with a hurtling sound,
As if some weapon swiftly clove it. No—
The falchion's course is silent as the grave

That yawns before its victim. Gracious powers,
If the great duty of my life be near,
Grant it may be to suffer, not to strike! [Exit.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A Terrace of the Temple.

CLEMANTHE, ION.

CLEMANTHE. Nay, I must chide this sorrow from thy
brow,
Or 't will rebuke my happiness;—I know
Too well the miseries that hem us round;
And yet the inward sunshine of my soul,
Unclouded by their melancholy shadows,
Bathes in its deep tranquillity one image—
One only image, which no outward storm
Can ever ruffle. Let me wean thee, then,
From this vain pondering o'er the general grief,
Which makes my joy look guilty.

ION. No, my fair one,
The gloom that wrongs thy love is unredeem'd
By generous sense of others' woe: too sure
It rises from dark presages within,
And will not leave me.

CLEMANTHE. Then it is most groundless!
Hast thou not won the blessings of the perishing
By constancy, the fame of which shall live
While a heart beats in Argos?—hast thou not
Upon one agitated bosom pour'd
Delicious peace? and can thy generous nature,
While it thus sheds felicity around it,
Remain itself unblest'd?

ION. I strove awhile
To think the assured possession of thy love
With too divine a burthen weigh'd my heart
And press'd my spirits down; but 't is not so;
Nor will I with false tenderness beguile thee,
By feigning that my sadness has a cause

So exquisite. Clemanthe! thou wilt find me
A sad companion;—I who knew not life,
Save as the sportive breath of happiness,
Now feel my minutes teeming, as they rise,
With grave experiences; I dream no more
Of azure realms where restless beauty sports
In myriad shapes fantastic; dismal vaults
In black succession open, till the gloom
Afar is broken by a streak of fire
That shapes my name—the fearful wind that moans
Before the storm articulates its sound;
And as I pass'd, but now, the solemn range
Of Argive monarchs, that in sculptured mockery
Of present empire sit, their eyes of stone
Bent on me instinct with a frightful life
That drew me into fellowship with them,
As conscious marble; while their ponderous lips—
Fit organs of eternity—unclosed,
And, as I live to tell thee, murmur'd "Hail!
Hail! ION THE DEVOTED!"

CLEMANTHE. These are fancies,
Which thy soul, late expanded with great purpose,
Shapes, as it quivers to its natural circle
In which its joys should lurk, as in the bud
The cells of fragrance cluster. Cast them from thee,
And strive to be thyself.

ION. I will do so!
I'll gaze upon thy loveliness, and drink
Its quiet in;—how beautiful thou art!—
My pulse throbs now as it was wont;—a being,
Which owns so fair a glass to mirror it,
Cannot show darkly.

CLEMANTHE. We shall soon be blessed;
My father will rejoice to own our love,
And Argos brighten;—for her tyrant's course
Must have a speedy end.

ION. It must! It must!

CLEMANTHE. Yes; for no empty talk of public wrongs
Assails him now; keen hatred and revenge
Are roused to crush him.

ION. Not by such base agents
May the august lustration be achieved:
He who shall cleanse his country from the guilt
For which Heaven smites it, should be pure of soul,
Guileless as infancy, and undisturb'd
By personal anger as thy father is,
When, with unswerving hand and piteous eye,

He stops the brief life of the innocent lamb
Bound with white fillets to the altar;—so
Enwreathed by fate the royal victim heaves,
And soon his breast shall shrink beneath the knife
Of the selected slayer!

CLEMANTHE. 'T is thyself
Whom thy strange language pictures—Ion! thou—

ION. She has said it! Her pure lips have spoken out
What all things intimate;—didst thou not mark
Me for the office of avenger—*me*?

CLEMANTHE. No;—save from the wild picture that thy
fancy—

Thy o'erwrought fancy drew; I thought it look'd
Too like thee, and I shudder'd.

ION. So do I!

And yet I sometimes wish I shudder'd more,
For the dire thought has grown familiar with me—
Could I escape it!

CLEMANTHE. 'T will away in sleep.

ION. No, no! I dare not sleep—for well I know
That then the knife will gleam, the blood will gush,
The form will stiffen!—I will walk awhile
In the soft evening light, and try to chase
These fearful images away.

CLEMANTHE. Let me
Go with thee. O, how often hand in hand
In such a lovely night have we roam'd westward
Aimless and blessed, when we were no more
Than playmates:—surely we are not grown stranger
Since yesterday!

ION. No, dearest, not to-night:
The plague yet rages fiercely in the vale,
And I am placed in grave commission here
To watch the gates;—indeed thou must not pass;
I will be merrier when we meet again,—

Trust me, my love, I will; farewell! [*Exit* ION.]

CLEMANTHE. Farewell then!

How fearful disproportion shows in one
Whose life hath been all harmony! He bends
Towards that thick covert where in blessed hour
My father found him, which has ever been
His chosen place of musing. Shall I follow?
Am I already grown a selfish mistress,
To watch his solitude with jealous eye,
And claim him all?—That let me never be—
Yet danger from within besets him now,
Known to me only—I will follow him! [*Exit*.]

SCENE II.

An Opening in a deep Wood—in front an old grey Altar.

Enter ION.

ION. O winding pathways, o'er whose scanty blades
Of unaspiring grass mine eyes have bent
So often when by musing fancy sway'd,
That craved alliance with no wider scene
Than your fair thickets border'd, but was pleased
To deem the toilsome years of manhood flown,
And, on the pictured mellowness of age
Idly reflective, image my return
From careful wanderings, to find ye gleam
With unchanged aspect on a heart unchanged,
And melt the busy past to a sweet dream
As then the future was;—why should ye now
Echo my steps with melancholy sound
As ye were conscious of a guilty presence?
The lovely light of eve, that, as it waned,
Touch'd ye with softer, homelier look, now fades
In dismal blackness; and yon twisted roots
Of ancient trees, with whose fantastic forms
My thoughts grew humorous, look terrible,
As if about to start to serpent life,
And hiss around me;—whither shall I turn?—
Where fly?—I see the myrtle-cradled spot
Where human love instructed by divine
Found and embraced me first; I'll cast me down
Upon that earth as on a mother's breast,
In hope to feel myself again a child.

[ION goes into the wood.]

Enter CTESIPHON, CASSANDER, and other Argive youths.

CTESIPHON. This is the spot which Phocion chose for
meeting;
The twilight deepens, yet he does not come.
O, if, instead of idle dreams of freedom,
He knew the sharpness of a grief like mine,
He would not linger thus!

CASSANDER. The sun's broad disk
Of misty red, a few brief minutes since,
Sank 'neath the leaden wave; but night steals on
With rapid pace to veil us, and thy thoughts
Are eager as the favouring darkness.

Enter PHOCION.

CTESIPHON.

Welcome!

Thou know'st all here.

PHOCION.

Yes; I rejoice, Cassander,
To find thee my companion in a deed
Worthy the noblest thought we shar'd in childhood,
When we, two rebel youths, grew safely brave
In visionary peril. Ctesiphon,
We look to thee for guidance in our aim.

CTESIPHON. I bring you glorious news. There is a
soldier,

Who in his reckless boyhood was my comrade,
And though by taste of luxury subdued
Even to brook the tyrant's service, burns
With generous anger to avenge that grief
I bear above all others. He has made
The retribution sure. From him I learnt
That when Adrastus reach'd his palace court,
He paused, to struggle with some mighty throe
Of passion; then call'd eagerly for wine,
And bade his soldiers share his choicest stores,
And snatch, like him, a day from fortune. Soon,
As one worn out by watching and excess,
He stagger'd to his couch, where now he lies
Oppress'd with heavy sleep, while his loose soldiers,
Made by the fierce carousal vainly mad
Or grossly dull, are scatter'd through the courts
Unarm'd and cautionless. The eastern portal
Is at this moment open; by that gate
We all may enter unperceived, and line
The passages which gird the royal chamber,
While one blest hand accomplish the award
Which Heaven pronounces. Nothing now remains,
But that as all would share this action's glory,
We join in one great vow, and choose one arm
Our common minister. Oh, if these sorrows
Confer on me the office to return
Upon the tyrant's shivering heart the blow
Which crush'd my father's spirit, I will leave
To him who cares for toys the patriot's laurel
And the applause of ages!

PHOCION.

Let the gods

By the old course of lot reveal the name
Of the predestined champion. For myself,
Here do I solemnly devote all powers
Of soul and body to that glorious purpose
We live but to fulfil.

CTESIPHON (*to ION*). Thy hand!
'Tis cold as death.

ION. Yes; but it is as firm.
What ceremony next?

[CTESIPHON *leads ION to the altar and gives him a knife.*

CTESIPHON. Receive this steel,
For ages dedicate in my sad home
To sacrificial uses; grasp it nobly,
And consecrate it to untrembling service
Against the King of Argos and his race.

ION. His race! Is he not left alone on earth?
He has no brother, and no child.

CTESIPHON. Such words
The god hath used who never speaks in vain.

PHOCION. There were old rumours of an infant born
And strangely vanishing;—a tale of guilt
Half-hush'd, perchance distorted in the hushing.
And by the wise scarce heeded, for they deem'd it
One of the thousand guilty histories,
Which, if the walls of palaces could speak,
Would show that, nursed by prideful luxury,
To pamper which the virtuous peasant toils,
Crimes go unpunish'd, which the pirates' cave,
Or want's foul hovel, or the cell which justice
Keeps for unlicensed guilt, would startle at!
We must root out the stock, that no stray scion
Renew the tree, whose branches, stifling virtue,
Shed poison-dews on life.

ION (*approaches the altar, and lifting up the knife, speaks*). Ye eldest gods,
Who in no statues of exactest form
Are palpable; who shun the azure heights
Of beautiful Olympus, and the sound
Of ever-young Apollo's minstrelsy;
Yet, mindful of the empire which ye held
Over dim chaos, keep revengeful wrath
On falling nations, and on kingly lines
About to sink for ever: ye, who shed
Into the passions of earth's giant brood
And their fierce usages the sense of justice;
Who clothe the fated battlements of tyranny
With blackness as a funeral pall, and breathe
Through the proud halls of time-embolden'd guilt
Portents of ruin, hear me!—In your presence,
For now I feel ye nigh,—I dedicate
This arm to the destruction of the king

And of his race; O keep me pitiless:
Expel all human weakness from my frame,
That this keen weapon shake not when his heart
Should feel its point; and if he has a child
Whose blood is needful to the sacrifice
My country asks, harden my soul to shed it!—
Was not that thunder?

CTESIPHON. No; I heard no sound.
Now mark me, Ion! thou shalt straight be led
To the king's chamber: we shall be at hand;
Nothing can give thee pause. Hold! one should watch
The city's eastern portal, lest the troops,
Returning from the work of plunder home,
Surround us unprepared. (*To PHOCION*). Be that thy duty.

PHOCION. I am to second Ion if he fail.

CTESIPHON. He cannot fail;—I shall be nigh. What, Ion?

ION. Who spake to me? Where am I? Friends, your
pardon;
I am prepared; yet grant me for a moment,
One little moment, to be left alone.

CTESIPHON. Be brief then, or the season of revenge
Will pass. At yonder thicket we'll expect thee.

[*Exeunt all but Ion*.]

ION. Methinks I breathe more freely, now my lot
Is palpable, and mortals gird me round,
Though my soul owns no sympathy with theirs.
Some one approaches—I must hide this knife—
Hide! I have ne'er till now had aught to hide
From any human eye.

[*He conceals the knife in his vest*.]

Enter CLEMANTHE.

Clemanthe here!

CLEMANTHE. Forgive me that I break upon thee thus:
I meant to watch thy steps unseen; but night
Is thickening; thou art haunted by sad fancies,
And 't is more terrible to think upon thee
Wandering with such companions in thy bosom,
Than in the peril thou art wont to seek
Beside the bed of death.

ION. Death, say'st thou? Death?
Is it not righteous when the gods decree it?
And brief its sharpest agony? Yet, fairest,
It is no theme for thee. Go in at once,
And think of it no more.

CLEMANTHE. Not without thee.
Indeed thou art not well; thy hands are marble;

Thine eyes are fix'd; let me support thee, love:—
 Ha! what is that gleaming within thy vest?
 A knife! Tell me its purpose, Ion!

ION. No;

My oath forbids.

CLEMANTHE. An oath! O gentle Ion,
 What can have link'd thee to a cause which needs
 A stronger cement than a good man's word?
 There's danger near thee. Wilt thou keep it from me?

ION. Alas, I must. Thou wilt know all full soon—
 [Voices call, Ion!

Hark! I am call'd.

CLEMANTHE. Nay, do not leave me thus.

ION. 'Tis very sad (*voices again*)—I dare not stay—
 farewell! [*Exit.*

CLEMANTHE. It must be to Adrastus that he flies!
 If by his hand the fated tyrant die,
 Austere remembrance of the deed will hang
 Upon his delicate spirit like a cloud,
 And tinge its world of happy images
 With hues of horror. Shall I seek the palace,
 And, as the price of my disclosure, claim
 His safety? No!—'Tis never woman's part
 Out of her fond misgivings to perplex
 The fortunes of the man to whom she cleaves;
 'Tis hers to weave all that she has of fair
 And bright in the dark meshes of their web
 Inseparate from their folds. My wayward heart
 Has found its refuge in a hero's love,
 Whatever destiny his generous soul
 Shape for him;—'t is its duty to be still
 And trust him till it bound or break with his. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

A Chamber in the Temple.

Enter MEDON, followed by HABRA.

MEDON. My daughter not within the temple, say'st thou?
 Abroad at such an hour? Speak! Did not Phocion
 Or Ion bear her company? 't was Ion—
 Confess—was it not he? I shall not chide.

HABRA. She went alone, but Ion just before
 Had taken the same path.

MEDON. She went to meet him.

I would they were return'd; the night is grown
Of an unusual blackness. Some one comes—
Look if it be my daughter.

HABRA (*looking out*). No; young Irus,
The little slave, whose pretty tale of grief
Agenor, with so gracious a respect,
This morning told us.

MEDON. Let him come; he bears
Some message from his master.

Enter IRUS.

MEDON (*to IRUS*). Thou art pale:
Has any evil happen'd to Agenor?

IRUS. No, my good lord; I do not come from him;
I bear to thee a scroll from one who now
Is number'd with the dead; he was my kinsman,
But I had never seen him till he lay
Upon his death-bed; for he left these shores
Long before I was born, and no one knew
His place of exile;—on this mournful day
He landed, was plague-stricken, and expired.
My gentle master gave me leave to tend
His mortal sickness; when his end drew nigh
He call'd for parchment, and with trembling hand,
That seem'd to gather firmness from its task,
Wrote earnestly; conjured me take the scroll
Instant to thee; and died.

[IRUS gives a scroll to MEDON.]

MEDON (*reading the scroll*). These are great tidings.
Habra! is not Clemanthe come? I long
To tell her all.

Enter CLEMANTHE.

Sit down, my pensive child.
Habra, this boy is faint; see him refresh'd
With food and wine before thou lett'st him pass.

IRUS. I have too long been absent from Agenor,
Who needs my slender help.

MEDON. I must employ
Thy master's power for once, to use it so
As he would use it. Keep him prisoner, Habra,
Till he has done my bidding. [*Exeunt HABRA and IRUS.*

Now, Clemanthe,
Though thou hast play'd the truant and the rebel,
I will not be too strict in my award,
By keeping from thee news of one to thee
Most dear—nay, do not blush—I say most dear.

CLEMANTHE. It is of Ion;—no—I do not blush,
But tremble. O my father, what of Ion?

MEDON. How often have we guess'd his lineage noble!
And now 't is proved. The kinsman of that youth
Was with another hired to murder him
A babe;—they tore him from his mother's breast,
And to a sea-girt summit where a rock
O'erhung a chasm, by the surge's force
Made terrible, rush'd with him. As the gods
In mercy order'd it, the foremost ruffian,
Who bore no burden, pressing through the gloom
In the wild hurry of his guilty purpose,
Trode at the extreme verge upon a crag
Loosen'd by summer from its granite bed,
And suddenly fell with it;—with his fall
Sank the base daring of the man who held
The infant; so he placed the unconscious babe
Upon the spot where it was found by me;
Watch'd till he saw the infant safe; then fled,
Fearful of question; and return'd to die.
That child is Ion. Whom dost guess his sire?—
The first in Argos.

CLEMANTHE. Dost thou mean Adrastus?
He cannot—must not—be that tyrant's son!

MEDON. It is most certain. Wherefore dost thou
change?

He hath no touch of his rash father's pride;
For nature, from whose genial lap he smiled
Upon us first, hath moulded him her own
With happiest nurture.

CLEMANTHE. While we talk he stains
His soul with parricide.

MEDON. Impossible!
Ion, the gentlest —

CLEMANTHE. It is true, my father;
I saw the weapon gleaming in his vest;
I heard him call'd!

MEDON. Shall I alarm the palace?

CLEMANTHE. No; in the fierce confusion, he would fall
Before our tale could be his safeguard. Gods!
Is there no hope, no refuge?

MEDON. Yes, if Heaven
Assist us. I bethink me of a passage,
Which, fashion'd by a king in pious zeal,
That he might seek the altar of the god
In secret, from the temple's inmost shrine
Leads to the royal chamber. I have track'd it

In youth for pastime. Could I thread it now,
I yet might rescue him.

CLEMANTHE. Make haste, my father!
Shall I attend thee?

MEDON. No; thou wouldst impede
My steps;—thou art fainting; when I have lodged thee
safe

In thy own chamber, I will light the torch,
And instantly set forward.

CLEMANTHE. Do not waste
An instant's space on me; speed, speed, my father—
The fatal moments fly; I need no aid;
Thou seest I am calm, quite calm.

MEDON. The gods protect thee!
[*Exeunt severally.*]

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

The Royal Chamber—ADRASTUS on a couch, asleep.

Enter ION with the knife.

ION. Why do I creep thus stealthily along
With trembling steps? Am I not arm'd by Heaven
To execute its mandate on a king
Whom it hath doom'd? And shall I falter now,
While every moment that he breathes may crush
Some life else happy?—Can I be deceived
By some foul passion, crouching in my soul,
Which takes a radiant form to lure me on?
Assure me, gods!—Yes; I have heard your voices;
For I dare pray ye now to nerve my arm
And see me strike! [*He goes to the couch.*]

He's smiling in his slumber,
As if some happy thought of innocent days
Play'd at his heart-strings: must I scare it thence
With death's sharp agony? He lies condemn'd
By the high judgment of supernal Powers,
And he shall know their sentence. Wake, Adrastus!
Collect thy spirits, and be strong to die!

ADRASTUS. Who dares disturb my rest? Guards! Soldiers! Recreants!

Where tarry ye? Why smite ye not to earth
This bold intruder?—Ha! no weapon here!—
What wouldst thou with me, ruffian? [Rising.

ION. I am none,
But a sad instrument in Jove's great hand
To take thy life, long forfeited—Prepare!
Thy hour is come!

ADRASTUS. Villains! does no one hear?

ION. Vex not the closing minutes of thy being
With torturing hope or idle rage; thy guards,
Unmann'd by revelry, are scatter'd senseless,
While the most valiant of our Argive youths
Hold every passage by which human aid
Could reach thee. Present death is the award
Of Powers who watch above me while I stand
To execute their sentence.

ADRASTUS. Thou!—I know thee—
The youth I spared this morning; in whose ear
I pour'd the secrets of my bosom. Kill me,
If thou darest do it; but bethink thee first
How the black memory of thy thankless deed
Will haunt thee to the grave!

ION. It is most true;
Thou sparedst my life, and therefore do the gods
Ordain me to this office, lest thy fall
Seem the chance forfeit of some single sin,
And not the great redress of Argos. Now—
Now, while I parley—Spirits that have left,
Within this hour, their plague-tormented flesh
To rot untomb'd, glide by, and frown on me,
Their slow avenger—and the chamber swarms
With looks of Furies—Yet a moment wait,
Ye dreadful prompters!—If there is a friend,
Whom dying thou wouldst greet by word or token,
Speak thy last bidding.

ADRASTUS. I have none on earth.
If thou hast courage, end me!

ION. Not one friend!
Most piteous doom!

ADRASTUS. Art melted?

ION. If I am,
Hope nothing from my weakness; mortal arms,
And eyes unseen that sleep not, gird us round,
And we shall fall together. Be it so!

ADRASTUS. No; strike at once; my hour is come: in
thee

I recognise the minister of Jove,
And, kneeling thus, submit me to his power.
[ADRASTUS kneels.]

ION. Avert thy face!

ADRASTUS. No; let me meet thy gaze;
For breathing pity lights thy features up
Into more awful likeness of a form
Which once shone on me; and which now my sense
Shapes palpable—in habit of the grave,
Inviting me to the sad realm where shades
Of innocents, whom passionate regard
Link'd with the guilty, are content to pace
With them the margin of the inky flood
Mournful and calm;—'t is surely there!—she waves
Her pallid hand in circle o'er thy head,
As if to bless thee—and I bless thee too,
Death's gracious angel!—Do not turn away.

ION. Gods! to what office have ye doom'd me! Now!

[ION raises his arm to stab ADRASTUS, who is
kneeling, and gazes stedfastly upon him. The
voice of MEDON is heard without, calling ION!
ION!—ION drops his arm.]

ADRASTUS. Be quick, or thou art lost!

[As ION has again raised his arm to strike, MEDON
rushes in behind him.]

MEDON. Ion, forbear!
Behold thy son, Adrastus!

[ION stands for a moment stupified with horror,
drops the knife, and falls senseless on the
ground.]

ADRASTUS. What strange words
Are these which call my senses from the death
They were composed to welcome? Son! 't is false—
I had but one—and the deep wave rolls o'er him!

MEDON. That wave received, instead of the fair nurse-
ling,
One of the slaves who bore him from thy sight
In wicked haste to slay;—I'll give thee proofs.

ADRASTUS. Great Jove, I thank thee!—raise him gently
—proofs!
Are there not here the lineaments of her
Who made me happy once—the voice, now still,
That bade the long-seal'd fount of love gush out,
While with a prince's constancy he came
To lay his noble life down; and the sure,

The dreadful proof, that he whose guileless brow
Is instinct with her spirit, stood above me,
Arm'd for the traitor's deed?—It is my child!

[*ION reviving, sinks on one knee before ADRASTUS.*

ION. Father! [Noise without.

MEDON. The clang of arms!

ION (*starting up*). They come! they come!
They who are leagued with me against thy life.
Here let us fall!

ADRASTUS. I will confront them yet.
Within I have a weapon which has drunk
A traitor's blood ere now;—there will I wait them:
No power less strong than death shall sever us.

[*Exeunt ADRASTUS and ION as to an inner chamber.*

MEDON. Have mercy on him, gods, for the dear sake
Of your most single-hearted worshipper!

Enter CTESIPHON, CASSANDER, and others.

CTESIPHON. What treachery is this—the tyrant fled,
And Ion fled too!—Comrades, stay this dotard,
While I search yonder chamber.

MEDON. Spare him, friends,—
Spare him to clasp awhile his new-found son;
O spare our Ion's father!

CTESIPHON. Father! yes—
That is indeed a name to bid me spare;
Let me but find him, gods!

[*He rushes into the inner chamber.*

MEDON (*to CASSANDER, and the others*). Had ye but seen
What I have seen, ye would have mercy on him.

CRYTHES enters with Soldiers.

Ha, soldiers! hasten to defend your master;
That way—

[*As CRYTHES is about to enter the inner chamber,*
CTESIPHON *rushes from it with a bloody dagger,*
and stops them.

CTESIPHON. It is accomplish'd; the foul blot
Is wiped away. Shade of my murder'd father,
Look on thy son, and smile!

CRYTHES. Whose blood is that?
It cannot be the king's!

CTESIPHON. It cannot be!
Think'st thou, foul minion of a tyrant's will,
He was to crush, and thou to crawl for ever?
Look there, and tremble!

CRYTHES. Wretch! thy life shall pay
The forfeit of this deed.

[CRYTHES and Soldiers seize CTESIPHON.]

Enter ADRASTUS mortally wounded, supported by ION.

ADRASTUS. Here let me rest;
In this old chamber my doom'd life began,
And here I'll end it: Crythes! thou hast timed
Thy visit well, to bring thy soldiers hither
To gaze upon my parting.

CRYTHES. To avenge thee;—
Here is the traitor!

ADRASTUS. Set him free at once:
Why do ye not obey me? Ctesiphon,
I gave thee cause for this;—believe me now
That thy true steel has made thy vengeance sure;
And as we now stand equal, I will sue
For a small boon—let me not see thee more.

CTESIPHON. Farewell! [Exit.]

ADRASTUS (to CRYTHES and the Soldiers). Why do ye
throng death's chamber thus?
Begone!—still do ye hover round my couch!
If the commandment of a dying king
Is feeble, as a man who has embraced
His child for the first time since infancy,
And presently must part with him for ever,
I do adjure ye leave us!

[Exeunt all but ION and ADRASTUS.]

ION. O my father!
How is it with thee now?

ADRASTUS. Well; very well;—
Avenging Fate hath spent its utmost force
Against me; and I gaze upon my son
With the sweet certainty that nought can part us
Till all is quiet here. How like a dream
Seems the succession of my regal pomps
Since I embraced my newborn child! To me
The interval has been a weary one:
How has it pass'd with thee?

ION. But that my heart
Has sometimes ached for the sweet sense of kindred,
I had enjoy'd a round of happy years
As cherish'd youth e'er knew.

ADRASTUS. I bless the gods
That they have strewn along thy humble path
Delights unblamed; and in this hour I seem

As if I had lived nobly; and I feel
That I shall live in thee, unless that curse—
Oh, if it should survive me!

ION. Think not of it;
The gods have shed such sweetness through this moment,
That, howsoe'er they deal with me hereafter,
I shall not deem them angry. Let me call
For help to stanch thy wound; thou art strong yet,
And yet may live to bless me.

ADRASTUS. Do not stir;
My strength is ebbing fast; yet as it leaves me,
The spirit of my days of blameless love
Awakens; and their images of joy,
Which at thy voice started from blank oblivion,
When thou wert strange to me, and then half-shown
Look'd sadly through the mist of guilty years,
Now glimmer on me in the lovely light
Which at thy age they wore. Thou art all thy mother's,
Her elements of gentlest virtue cast
In mould heroical.

ION. Thy speech grows fainter;
Can I do nothing for thee?

ADRASTUS. Yes:—my son,
Thou art the best, the bravest of a race
Of rightful monarchs; thou must mount the throne
Thy ancestors have fill'd, and by great deeds
Efface the memory of thy fated sire,
And win the blessing of the gods for men
Stricken for him. Swear to me thou wilt do this,
And I shall die forgiven!

ION. I will.

ADRASTUS. Rejoice,
Sufferers of Argos! I am growing weak,
And mine eyes dazzle; let me rest my hands,
Ere they have lost their feeling, on thy head.—
So! So!—thy hair is glossy to the touch
As when I last enwreath'd its tiny curl
About my finger; I did image then
Thy reign excelling mine; it is fulfill'd,
And I die happy. Bless thee, King of Argos! [*Dies.*]

ION. He's dead! and I am fatherless again.—
King did he hail me? Shall I make that word
A spell to bid old happiness awake
Throughout the lovely land that father'd me
In my forsaken childhood?

[*He sees the knife on the ground, and takes it up.*]

Most vain dream!
 This austere monitor had bid thee vanish
 Ere half-reveal'd. Come back, thou truant steel;
 Half of thy work the gods absolved thee from—
 The rest remains! Lie there!

[He conceals the knife in his vest. Shouts heard without.]

The voice of joy!
 Is this thy funeral wailing? O my father!
 Mournful and brief will be the heritage
 Thou leavest me; yet I promised thee in death
 To grasp it;—and I will embrace it nobly.

Enter AGENOR and others.

AGENOR. Does the king live?

ION. Alas! in me. The son
 Of him whose princely spirit is at rest,
 Claims his ancestral honours.

AGENOR. That high thought
 Anticipates the prayer of Argos, roused
 To sudden joy. The sages wait without
 To greet thee; wilt confer with them to-night,
 Or wait the morning?

ION. Now. The city's state
 Allows the past no sorrow. I attend them. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE II.

Before the Gate of the City.

PHOCION on guard.

PHOCION. Fool that I was to take this idle office
 At most inglorious distance from the scene
 Which shall be freedom's birth-place; to endure
 The phantasies of danger which the soul
 Uncheer'd by action coldly dallies with
 Till it begins to shiver! Long ere this,
 If Ion's hand be firm, the deed is past,
 And yet no shout announces that the bonds
 Of tyranny are broken. *[Shouts at a distance.]*
 Hark! 't is done!

Enter CTESIPHON.

All hail, my brother freeman!—art not so?—
 Thy looks are haggard—is the tyrant slain?
 Is liberty achieved?

Mark me!—"the race" of him my arm has dealt with.
Now is the time, the palace all confused,
And Ion dizzy with strange turns of fortune,
To do thy part.

PHOCION. Have mercy on my weakness!
If thou hadst known this comrade of my sports,
One of the same small household whom his mirth
Unfailing gladden'd;—if a thousand times
Thou hadst, by strong prosperity made thoughtless,
Touch'd his unfather'd nature in its nerve
Of agony, and felt no chiding glance;—
Hadst thou beheld him overtax his strength
To serve the wish his genial instinct guess'd,
Till his dim smile the weariness betray'd,
Which it would fain dissemble; hadst thou known
In sickness the sweet magic of his care,
Thou couldst not ask it.—Hear me, Ctesiphon!—
I lay in fever once, which slaves refused
To tend; he glided to my lonely bed,
And soothed my dull ear with discourse which grew
By nice degrees to ravishment, till pain
Seem'd an heroic sense, which made me kin
To the great deeds he pictured; and the brood
Of dizzy weakness flickering through the gloom
Of my small curtain'd prison caught the hues
Of beauty spangling out in glorious change;
And it became a luxury to lie
And faintly listen. Canst thou bid me slay him?

CTESIPHON. The deed be mine. Thou'lt not betray me?
[Going.]

PHOCION. Hold!
If by our dreadful compact he must fall,
I will not smite him with my coward thought
Winging a distant arm; I will confront him
Arm'd with delicious memories of our youth,
And pierce him through them all.

CTESIPHON. Be speedy, then!

PHOCION. Fear not that I shall prove a laggard, charged
With weight of such a purpose.—Fate commands,
And I live now but to perform her bidding.

[Exeunt severally.]

SCENE III.

A Terrace in the Garden of the Palace, by Moonlight.

Enter ION and AGENOR.

AGENOR. Wilt thou not seek repose?

ION. My rest is here—
Beneath the greatness of the heavens, which awes
My spirit, toss'd by sudden change, and torn
By various passions, to repose. Yet age
Requires more genial nourishment—pray seek it—
I will but keep thee to inquire once more
If any symptom of returning health
Bless the wan city?

AGENOR. No—the perishing
Lift up their painful heads to bless thy name,
And their eyes kindle as they utter it;
But still they perish.

ION. So!—give instant order,
The rites which shall confirm me in my throne
Be solemnised to-morrow.

AGENOR. How! so soon,
While the more sacred duties to the dead
Remain unpaid?

ION. Let them abide my time—
They will not tarry long. I see thee gaze
With wonder on me—do my bidding now,
And trust me till to-morrow. Pray go in,
The night will chill thee else.

AGENOR. Farewell, my lord! [*Exit.*]

ION. Now all is stillness in my breast—how soon
To be displaced by more profound repose,
In which no thread of consciousness shall live
To feel how calm it is!—O lamp serene,
Do I lift up to thee undazzled eyes
For the last time? Shall I enjoy no more
Thy golden haziness which seem'd akin
To my young fortune's dim felicity?
And when it coldly shall embrace the urn
That shall contain my ashes, will no thought
Of all the sweet ones cherish'd by thy beams
Awake to tremble with them? Vain regret!
The pathway of my duty lies in sunlight,
And I would tread it with as firm a step,
Though it should terminate in cold oblivion,

As if Elysian pleasures at its close
Flash'd palpable to sight as things of earth.
Who passes there?

Enter PHOCION behind, who strikes at ION with a dagger.

PHOCION. This to the king of Argos!

[ION struggles with him, seizes the dagger, which
he throws away.]

ION. I will not fall by thee, poor wavering novice
In the assassin's trade!—thy arm is feeble—

[He confronts PHOCION.]

Phocion!—was this well aim'd? thou didst not mean—

PHOCION. I meant to take thy life, urged by remem-
brance

Of yesterday's great vow.

ION. And couldst thou think
I had forgotten?

PHOCION. Thou?

ION. Couldst thou believe,
That one, whose nature had been arm'd to stop
The life-blood's current in a fellow's veins,
Would hesitate when gentler duty turn'd
His steel to nearer use? To-morrow's dawn
Shall see me wield the sceptre of my fathers:
Come, watch beside my throne, and, if I fail
In sternest duty which my country needs,
My bosom will be open to thy steel,
As now to thy embrace!

PHOCION. Thus let me fall
Low at thy feet, and kneeling here receive
Forgiveness; do not crush me with more love
Than lies in the word "pardon."

ION. And that word
I will not speak;—what have I to forgive?
A devious fancy, and a muscle raised
Obedient to its impulse! Dost thou think
The tracings of a thousand kindnesses,
Which taught me all I guess'd of brotherhood,
Are in the rashness of a moment lost?

PHOCION. I cannot look upon thee; let me go,
And lose myself in darkness.

ION. Nay, old playmate,
We part not thus—the duties of my state
Will shortly end our fellowship; but spend
A few sweet minutes with me. Dost remember
How in a night like this we climb'd yon walls—

Two vagrant urchins, and with tremulous joy
 Skimm'd through these statue-border'd walks that gleam'd
 In bright succession? Let us tread them now;
 And think we are but older by a day,
 And that the pleasant walk of yesternight
 We are to-night retracing. Come, my friend!—
 What, drooping yet! thou wert not wont to seem
 So stubborn—cheerily, my Phocion—come! [*Exeunt.*]

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

*Time—The Morning of the Second Day.—The Terrace
 of the Palace.*

Two Soldiers on guard.

FIRST SOLDIER. A stirring season, comrade! our new
 prince
 Has leap'd as eagerly into his seat
 As he had languish'd an expectant heir
 Weary of nature's kindness to old age.
 He was esteem'd a modest stripling;—strange
 That he should, with such reckless hurry, seize
 The gaudy shows of power!

SECOND SOLDIER. 'T is honest nature;
 The royal instinct was but smouldering in him,
 And now it blazes forth. I pray the gods
 He may not give us cause to mourn his sire!

FIRST SOLDIER. No more; he comes.

Enter ION.

ION. Why do ye loiter here;
 Are all the statues deck'd with festal wreaths
 As I commanded?

FIRST SOLDIER. We have been on guard
 Here by Agenor's order since the nightfall.

ION. On guard! Well, hasten now and see it done;
 I need no guards. [*Exeunt Soldiers.*]

The awful hour draws near;
I think that I can meet it.—Phocion comes:
He will unman me; yet he must not go,
Thinking his presence painful.

Enter PHOCION.

Friend, good morrow!
Thou play'st the courtier early.

PHOCION. Canst thou speak
In that old tone of common cheerfulness,
That breathes the promise of delightful years,
And hold thy dreadful purpose?

ION. I have drawn
From the selectest fountain of repose
A blessed calm:—when I lay down to rest,
I fear'd lest bright remembrances of childhood
Should with untimely visitation mock me;
But deep and dreamless have my slumbers been.
If sight of thee renews the thoughts of life
Too busily,—I prize the love that wakes them.

PHOCION. Oh, cherish them, and let them plead with
thee
To grant my prayer,—that thou wouldst live for Argos,
Not die for her;—thy gracious life shall win
More than thy death the favour of the gods,
And charm the marble aspect of grim Fate
Into a blessed change: I, who am vow'd,
And who so late was arm'd Fate's minister,
Implore thee!

ION. Speak to me no more of life!
There is a dearer name I would recal—
Thou understand'st me—

Enter AGENOR.

AGENOR. Thou hast forgot to name
Who shall be bidden to this evening's feast.

ION. The feast! most true; I had forgotten it.
Bid whom thou wilt; but let there be large store,
If our sad walls contain it, for the wretched
Whom hunger palsies. It may be few else
Will taste it with a relish.

[*Exit AGENOR.*

[ION resumes his address to PHOCION, and continues it, broken by the interruptions which follow.

I would speak
A word of her who yester-morning rose

To her light duties with as blithe a heart
 As ever yet its equal beating veil'd
 In moveless alabaster;—plighted now,
 In liberal hour, to one whose destiny
 Shall freeze the sources of enjoyment in it,
 And make it heavy with the life-long pang
 A widow'd spirit bears!—

Enter CLEON.

CLEON. The heralds wait
 To learn the hour at which the solemn games
 Shall be proclaim'd.

ION. The games!—yes, I remember
 That sorrow's darkest pageantries give place
 To youth's robustest pastimes—death and life
 Embracing:—at the hour of noon.

CLEON. The wrestlers
 Pray thee to crown the victor.

ION. If I live,
 Their wish shall govern me. [*Exit CLEON.*]

Could I recal
 One hour, and bid thy sister think of me
 With gentle sorrow, as a playmate lost,
 I should escape the guilt of having stopp'd
 The pulse of hope in the most innocent soul
 That ever passion ruffled. Do not talk
 Of me as I shall seem to thy kind thoughts,
 But harshly as thou canst; and if thou steal
 From thy rich store of popular eloquence
 Some bitter charge against the faith of kings,
 'T will be an honest treason.

Enter CASSANDER.

CASSANDER. Pardon me,
 If I entreat thee to permit a few
 Of thy once-cherish'd friends to bid thee joy
 Of that which swells their pride.

ION. They'll madden me.
 Dost thou not see me circled round with care?
 Urge me no more.

[*As CASSANDER is going, ION leaves PHOCION, and comes to him.*]

Come back, Cassander! see
 How greatness frets the temper. Keep this ring—
 It may remind thee of the pleasant hours
 That we have spent together, ere our fortunes

Grew separate; and with thy gracious speech
Excuse me to our friends. | *Exit CASSANDER.*

PHOCION. 'Tis time we seek
The temple.

ION. Phocion! must I seek the temple?

PHOCION. There sacrificial rites must be perform'd
Before thou art enthroned.

ION. Then I must gaze
On things which will arouse the struggling thoughts
I had subdued—perchance may meet with her
Whose name I dare not utter. I am ready. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The Temple.

CLEMANTHE, HABRA.

HABRA. Be comforted, dear lady;—he must come
To sacrifice.

CLEMANTHE. Recal that churlish word,
That stubborn "*must*," that bounds my living hopes,
As with an iron circle. He *must* come!
How piteous is affection's state, that cleaves
To such a wretched prop! I had flown to him
Long before this, but that I fear'd my presence
Might prove a burthen,—and he sends no word,
No token that he thinks of me! Art sure
That he *must* come? The hope has torture in it;
Yet it is all my bankrupt heart has left
To feed upon.

HABRA. I see him now with Phocion
Pass through the inner court.

CLEMANTHE. He will not come
This way, then, to the place for sacrifice.
I can endure no more: speed to him, Habra;
And bid him, if he holds Clemanthe's life
Worthy a minute's loss, to meet me here.

HABRA. Dear lady!—

CLEMANTHE. Do not answer me, but run,
Or I shall give yon crowd of sycophants
To gaze upon my sorrow. [*Exit HABRA.*

It is hard;
Yet I must strive to bear it, and find solace
In that high fortune which has made him strange.

He bends this way—but slowly—mournfully.
He's pale; he's ill; how has my censure wrong'd him!

Enter ION.

ION. What wouldst thou with me, lady?

CLEMANTHE. Is it so?
Nothing, my lord, save to implore thy pardon,
That the departing gleams of a bright dream,
From which I scarce had waken'd, made me bold
To crave a word with thee;—but all are fled—
And I have nought to seek.

ION. A goodly dream;
But thou art right to think it was no more,
And study to forget it.

CLEMANTHE. To forget it?
Indeed, my lord, I cannot wish to lose
What, being past, is all my future has;
All I shall live for: do not grudge me this,
The brief space I shall need it.

ION. Speak not, fair one,
In tone so mournful, for it makes me feel
Too sensibly the hapless wretch I am,
That troubled the deep quiet of thy soul
In that pure fountain which reflected heaven,
For a brief taste of rapture.

CLEMANTHE. Dost thou yet
Esteem it rapture, then? My foolish heart,
Be still! Yet wherefore should a crown divide us?
O, my dear Ion!—let me call thee so
This once at least—it could not in my thoughts
Increase the distance that there was between us,
When, rich in spirit, thou to strangers' eyes
Seem'd a poor foundling.

ION. It must separate us!
Think it no harmless bauble, but a curse
Will freeze the current in the veins of youth,
And from familiar touch of genial hand,
From household pleasures, from sweet daily tasks,
From airy thought, free wanderer of the heavens,
For ever banish me!

CLEMANTHE. Thou dost accuse
Thy state too hardly. It may give some room,
Some little space, amidst its radiant cares
For love and joy to breathe in.

ION. Not for me:
My pomp must be most lonesome, far removed
From that sweet fellowship of human kind

The slave rejoices in: my solemn robes
 Shall wrap me as a panoply of ice,
 And the attendants who may throng around me
 Shall want the flatteries which may basely warm
 The sceptred thing they circle. Dark and cold
 Stretches the path, which, when I wear the crown,
 I needs must enter:—the great gods forbid
 That thou shouldst follow in it!

CLEMANTHE. O unkind!
 And shall we never see each other?

ION (*after a pause*). Yes!
 I have ask'd that dreadful question of the hills
 That look eternal; of the flowing streams
 That lucid flow for ever; of the stars,
 Amid whose fields of azure my raised spirit
 Hath trod in glory: all were dumb; but now,
 While I thus gaze upon thy living face,
 I feel the love that kindles through its beauty
 Can never wholly perish; we *shall* meet
 Again, Clemanthe!

CLEMANTHE. Bless thee for that name;
 Call me that name again; thy words sound strangely,
 Yet they breathe kindness. Shall we meet indeed?
 Think not I would intrude upon thy cares,
 Thy councils, or thy pomps;—to sit at distance,
 To weave, with the nice labour which preserves
 The rebel pulses even, from gay threads
 Bright pictures of thy deeds, and sometimes catch
 The falling music of a gracious word,
 Or the stray sunshine of a smile, will be
 Comfort enough:—do not deny me this;
 Or if stern fate compel thee to deny,
 Kill me at once!

ION. No; thou must live, my fair one:
 There are a thousand joyous things in life,
 Which pass unheeded in a life of joy
 As thine hath been, till fitful sorrow comes
 To ruffle it; and daily duties paid
 Hardly at first, at length will bring repose
 To the sad mind that studies to perform them.
 Thou dost not mark me.

CLÉMANTHE. Oh, I do! I do!

ION. If for thy brother's and thy father's sake
 Thou art content to live, the healer, Time,
 Will reconcile thee to the lovely things
 Of this delightful world,—and if another,
 A happier—no, I cannot bid thee love

Another!—I did think I could have said it,
But 't is in vain.

CLEMANTHE. Thou art mine own then still?

ION. I am thine own! thus let me clasp thee; nearer.
O joy too thrilling and too short!

Enter AGENOR.

AGENOR. My lord,
The sacrificial rites await thy presence.

ION. I come.—One more embrace—the last, the last
In this world! Now, farewell! [*Exit.*

CLEMANTHE. The last embrace!
Then he has cast me off!—No, 't is not so;
Some mournful secret of his fate divides us:
I'll struggle to bear that, and snatch a comfort
From seeing him uplifted. I will look
Upon him in his state; Minerva's shrine
Will shelter me from vulgar gaze; I'll hasten,
And feast my sad eyes with his greatness there! [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

*The Great Square of the City—on one side a Throne of
state prepared,—on the other an Altar,—the Statues
decorated with garlands.*

Enter CTESIPHON and CASSANDER.

CTESIPHON. Vex me no more by telling me, Cassander,
Of his fair speech: I prize it at its worth;
Thou'lt see how he will act when seated firm
Upon the throne the craven tyrant fill'd,
Whose blood he boasts, unless some honest arm
Should shed it first.

CASSANDER. Hast thou forgot the time
When thou thyself wert eager to foretell
His manhood's glory from his childish virtues?
Let me not think thee one of those fond prophets,
Who are well pleased to prophesy success,
So it remain their dream.

CTESIPHON. Thou dost forget
What has chill'd fancy and delight within me—
[*Music at a distance.*

Hark!—servile trumpets speak his coming—watch
How power will change him; let us stand aside.

The Procession. Enter MEDON, AGENOR, PHOCION, TIMOCLES, CLEON, Sages, and People; ION last, in royal robes. He advances amidst shouts, and speaks.

ION. I thank you for your greeting—Shout no more,
But in deep silence raise your hearts to Heaven,
That it may strengthen one so young and frail
As I am, for the business of this hour.
Must I sit here?

MEDON. Permit thy earliest friend,
Who propp'd in infancy thy tottering steps,
To lead thee to thy throne,—and thus fulfil
His fondest vision.

ION. Thou art still most kind—

MEDON. Nay, do not think of me, my son! my son!
What ails thee? When thou shouldst reflect the joy
Of Argos, the strange paleness of the grave
Marbles thy face.

ION. Am I indeed so pale?
It is a solemn office I assume;
Yet thus, with Phoebus' blessing I embrace it.

[Sits on the throne.]

Stand forth, Agenor!

AGENOR. I await thy will.

ION. To thee I look as to the wisest friend
Of this afflicted people;—thou must leave
Awhile the quiet which thy life hath earn'd,
To rule our councils; fill the seats of justice
With good men not so absolute in goodness,
As to forget what human frailty is;
And order my sad country.

AGENOR. Pardon me—

ION. Nay, I will promise 't is my last request;
Thou never couldst deny me what I sought
In boyish wantonness, and shalt not grudge
Thy wisdom to me, till our state revive
From its long anguish;—it will not be long
If Heaven approve me here. Thou hast all power
Whether I live or die.

AGENOR. Die! I am old—

ION. Death is not jealous of thy mild decay,
Which gently wins thee his: exulting youth
Provokes the ghastly monarch's sudden stride,
And makes his horrid fingers quick to clasp
His shivering prey at noontide. Let me see
The captain of the guard.

CRYTHES. I kneel to crave
Humbly the favour which thy sire bestow'd
On one who loved him well.

ION. I cannot thank thee,
That wakest the memory of my father's weakness;
But I will not forget that thou hast shared
The light enjoyments of a noble spirit,
And learn'd the need of luxury. I grant
For thee and thy brave comrades, ample share
Of such rich treasure as my stores contain,
To grace thy passage to some distant land,
Where, if an honest cause engage thy sword,
May glorious laurels wreath it! In our realm
We shall not need it longer.

CRYTHES. Dost intend
To banish the firm troops before whose valour
Barbarian millions shrink appall'd, and leave
Our city naked to the first assault
Of reckless foes!

ION. No, Crythes!—in ourselves,
In our own honest hearts and chainless hands
Will be our safeguard:—while we seek no use
Of arms, we would not have our children blend
With their first innocent wishes; while the love
Of Argos and of justice shall be one
To their young reason; while their sinews grow
Firm 'midst the gladness of heroic sports:
We shall not ask to guard our country's peace
One selfish passion, or one venal sword.
I would not grieve thee;—but thy valiant troop—
For I esteem them valiant—must no more
With luxury which suits a desperate camp
Infect us. See that they embark, Agenor,
Ere night.

CRYTHES. My lord—

ION. No more—my word has pass'd.
Medon, there is no office I can add
To those thou hast grown old in; thou wilt guard
The shrine of Phœbus, and within thy home—
Thy too delightful home—befriend the stranger
As thou didst me;—there sometimes waste a thought
On thy spoil'd inmate!

MEDON. Think of thee, my lord?
Long shall we triumph in thy glorious reign—

ION. Prithee no more. Argives! I have a boon
To crave of you;—whene'er I shall rejoin
In death the father from whose heart in life

Stern fate divided me, think gently of him!
 For ye, who saw him in his full-blown pride,
 Knew little of affections crush'd within,
 And wrongs which nurtur'd frenzy; yet no more
 Let the great interests of the state depend
 Upon the thousand chances that may sway
 A piece of human frailty! Swear to me
 That ye will seek hereafter in yourselves
 The means of sovereign rule:—our narrow space,
 So happy in its confines, so compact,
 Needs not the magic of a single name
 Which wider regions may require to draw
 Their interests into one; but circled thus,
 Like a bless'd family by simple laws,
 May tenderly be govern'd; all degrees
 Moulded together as a single form
 Of breathing loveliness, which finest chords
 Of sympathy pervading shall suffuse
 In times of quiet with one bloom, and fill
 With one resistless impulse, if the hosts
 Of foreign power should threaten. Swear to me
 That ye will do this!

MEDON. Wherefore ask this now?
 Thou shalt live long;—the paleness of thy face
 Which late appall'd me wears a glory now,
 And thine eyes kindle with the prophecy
 Of lustrous years.

ION. The gods approve me then!
 Yet I will use the function of a king,
 And claim obedience. Promise if I leave
 No issue, that the sovereign power shall live
 In the affections of the general heart,
 And in the wisdom of the best.

MEDON, AND OTHERS. We swear it!

ION. Hear and record the oath, immortal powers!
 Now give me leave a moment to approach
 That altar unattended. [*He goes to the altar.*]

Gracious gods!
 In whose mild service my glad youth was spent,
 Look on me now;—and if there is a Power,
 As at this solemn time I feel there is,
 Beyond ye, that has breathed through all your shapes
 The Spirit of the Beautiful that lives
 In earth and heaven; to you I offer up
 This conscious being, full of life and love,

For my dear country's welfare. Let this blow
End all her sorrows!

[*Stabs himself, and falls. CTESIPHON rushes to support him.*]

Ctesiphon, thou art
Avenged and wilt forgive me.

CTESIPHON. Thou hast pluck'd
The poor disguise of hatred from my soul,
And made me feel how pitiful is thirst
For vengeance. Could I die to save thee!

CLEMANTHE *rushes forward.*

CLEMANTHE. Hold!
Let me support him—stand away—indeed—
I have best right, although ye know it not,
To cling to him in death.

ION. This is a joy
I did not hope for—this is sweet indeed.—
Bend thine eyes on me!

CLEMANTHE. And for this it was
Thou wouldst have wean'd me from thee? Couldst thou
think

I would be so divorced?

ION. Thou art right, Clemanthe,—
It was a shallow and an idle thought;
'Tis past; no show of coldness frets us now;
No vain disguise, my love. Yet thou wilt think
On that which, when I feign'd, I truly said—
Wilt thou not, sweet one?

CLEMANTHE. I will treasure all.

Enter IRUS.

IRUS. I bring you glorious tidings——Ha! no joy
Can enter here.

ION. Yes—is it as I hope?

IRUS. The pestilence abates.

ION (*springs on his feet*). Do ye not hear!
Why shout ye not?—ye are strong—think not of me;
Hearken! the curse may ancestry has spread
O'er Argos is dispell'd—Agenor, give
This gentle youth his freedom, who hath brought
Sweet tidings that I shall not die in vain—

And Medon! cherish him as thou hast one
 Who dying blesses thee;—my own Clemanthe!
 Let this console thee also—Argos lives—
 The offering is accepted—all is well! [Dies.]

THE END.

In the absence of any biographical information, the account of Dion Bourcicault must be brief. He was an actor at Covent Garden Theatre when he produced "London Assurance", a comedy which had then, and has since had, very great success. Several comedies and farces were subsequently produced by him, and many pieces were adapted **BOURCICAULT.** but his first success remains his greatest. He tried his powers as a melodramatic actor at the Princess's Theatre, in a drama of his own, called "The Vampire", and has of late years resided in America, where he has been warmly received.

And Modest cherish him as thou hast one
 Who dying blesses thee;—my own Clemanthal!
 Let this ransom thee also—Argos lives—
 The offering is accepted—all is well! [Dies.

THE END.

BOURICAULT.

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In the absence of any biographical information, the account of Dion BOURCIGAUT must be brief. He was an actor at Covent Garden Theatre when he produced "L'ordonnance", a comedy which had then, and has since had, very great success. Several comedies and farces were subsequently produced by him, and many pieces were adapted by him from the French; but his first success remains his greatest. He tried his powers as a melodramatic actor at the Princess's Theatre, in a drama of his own, called "The Vampire"; and has of late years resided in America, where he has been warmly received.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

LONDON ASSURANCE.

LONDON ASSURANCE:

A COMEDY

IN FIVE ACTS.

COOL. Half-past nine, and my father has not yet returned: I am in a fever to reveal a secret to him; to rise earlier than usual on any morning, he is sure to ask first for Mr. Charles. Poor old gentleman—he little thinks how he

Enter MARTIN, late.

Well, Martin, he has not come yet? The SCENE has in London and is represented in 1841. I cannot stand this any longer; I resign my seat to-night. This is the fifth night Mr. Cool has remained out, and I am obliged to him to watch for him. TIME—Three days.

COOL. You know if Sir Harcourt was aware that we connived at his son's irregularities, we should all be discharged.

MARTIN. I have used up all my common excuses on his sons—"Call again," "Not at home," and "Send it down to you," won't serve any more; and Mr. Crust, the wine-merchant, swears he will be paid.

COOL. So they all say. Why, he has arrests out against him already. I've seen the fellows watching the door—(loud knock and ring heard)—there he is just in

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SIR HARCOURT COURTLY.

MAX HARKAWAY.

CHARLES COURTLY.

MR. SPANKER.

DAZZLE.

MARK MEDDLE.

COOL, *Valet.*

SIMPSON, *Butler.*

MARTIN.

SOLOMON ISAACS.

JAMES.

LADY GAY SPANKER.

GRACE HARKAWAY.

PERT.

The SCENE lies in LONDON and GLOUCESTERSHIRE in 1841.

TIME—Three days.

LONDON ASSURANCE.

ACT I.

SCENE. — *An Ante-room in SIR HARCOURT COURTLY'S House in Belgrave Square. Four neat chairs, table.*

Enter COOL.

COOL. Half-past nine, and Mr. Charles has not yet returned: I am in a fever of dread. If his father happen to rise earlier than usual on any morning, he is sure to ask first for Mr. Charles. Poor deluded old gentleman—he little thinks how he is deceived.

Enter MARTIN, lazily.

Well, Martin, he has not come home yet?

MARTIN. No; and I have not had a wink of sleep all night—I cannot stand this any longer; I shall give warning. This is the fifth night Mr. Courtly has remained out, and I am obliged to stand at the hall window to watch for him.

COOL. You know if Sir Harcourt was aware that we connived at his son's irregularities, we should all be discharged.

MARTIN. I have used up all my common excuses on his duns—"Call again," "Not at home," and "Send it down to you," won't serve any more; and Mr. Crust, the wine-merchant, swears he will be paid.

COOL. So they all say. Why, he has arrests out against him already. I've seen the fellows watching the door—(*loud knock and ring heard*)—there he is just in

time—quick, Martin, for I expect Sir Harcourt's bell every moment (*small bell rings*)—and there it is.

[*Exit MARTIN, slowly.*]

Thank heaven! he will return to college to-morrow, and this heavy responsibility will be taken off my shoulders. A valet is as difficult a post to fill properly as that of prime minister.

[*Exit.*]

CHARLES COURTLY (*without*). Hollo!

DAZZLE (*without*). Steady!

Enter CHARLES COURTLY and DAZZLE.

COURTLY. Hollo-o-o——

DAZZLE. Hush! what are you about, howling like a Hottentot. Sit down there, and thank heaven you are in Belgrave-square, instead of Bow-street.

COURTLY. D—D—Damn Bow-street.

DAZZLE. Oh, with all my heart!—you have not yet seen as much of it as I have.

COURTLY. I say—let me see—what was I going to say?—oh, look here—(*he pulls out a large assortment of knockers, bell-pulls, &c., from his pocket.*) There! dam'me! I'll puzzle the postmen—I'll deprive them of their right of disturbing the neighbourhood. That black lion's head did belong to old Vampire, the money-lender; this bell-pull to Miss Stitch, the milliner.

DAZZLE. And this brass griffin——

COURTLY. That! oh, let me see—I think—I twisted that off our own hall-door as I came in, while you were paying the cab.

DAZZLE. What shall I do with them?

COURTLY. Be kind to 'em—pack 'em in a small hamper, and send 'em to the sitting magistrate with my father's compliments; in the mean time come into my room, and I'll astonish you with some Burgundy. (*They rise.*)

Enter COOL.

COOL. Mr. Charles——

COURTLY. Out! out! not at home to any one.

COOL. And drunk——

COURTLY. As a lord.

COOL. If Sir Harcourt knew this he would go mad, he would discharge me.

COURTLY. You flatter yourself, that would be no proof of his insanity.—(*To DAZZLE.*)—This is Cool, sir, Mr. Cool; he is the best liar in London—there is a pungency about his invention, and an originality in his equivocation, that is perfectly refreshing.

COOL (*aside*). Why, Mr. Charles, where did you pick him up?

COURTLY. You mistake, he picked *me* up. (*Bell rings.*)

COOL. Here comes Sir Harcourt—pray do not let him see you in this state.

COURTLY. State! what do you mean? I am in a beautiful state.

COOL. I should lose my character.

COURTLY. That would be a fortunate epoch in your life, Cool.

COOL. Your father would discharge me.

COURTLY. How dare you get drunk—sir?

COOL. Retire to your own room, for heaven's sake, Mr. Charles.

COURTLY. I'll do so for my own sake. (*To DAZZLE.*) I say old fellow, (*staggering*) just hold the door steady while I go in.

DAZZLE. This way. Now then!—take care!
[*Helps him into the room.*]

Enter SIR HARCOURT COURTLY in an elegant dressing-gown, and Greek scull-cap and tassels, &c., &c.

SIR HARCOURT. Cool, is breakfast ready?

COOL. Quite ready, Sir Harcourt.

SIR HARCOURT. Apropos. I omitted to mention that I expect Squire Harkaway to join us this morning, and you must prepare for my departure to Oak Hall immediately.

COOL. Leave town in the commencement of the season, Sir Harcourt? So unprecedented a proceeding.

SIR HARCOURT. It is. I confess it, there is but one power could effect such a miracle—that is divinity.

COOL. How!

SIR HARCOURT. In female form of course. Cool, I am about to present society with a second Lady Courtly; young—blushing eighteen; lovely! I have her portrait;—rich! I have her banker's account;—an heiress, and a Venus!

COOL. Lady Courtly, could be none other.

SIR HARCOURT. Ha! ha! Cool, your manners are above your station.—Apropos, I shall find no further use for my brocaded dressing gown.

COOL. I thank you, Sir Harcourt; might I ask who the fortunate lady is?

SIR HARCOURT. Certainly;—Miss Grace Harkaway, the niece of my old friend Max.

COOL. Have you never seen the lady, sir?

SIR HARCOURT. Never—that is, yes—eight years ago. Having been, as you know, on the Continent for the last seven years, I have not had the opportunity of paying my devoirs—our connection and betrothal was a very extraordinary one. Her father's estates were contiguous to mine;—being a penurious, miserly, ugly old scoundrel, he made a market of my indiscretion, and supplied my extravagance with large sums of money on mortgages, his great desire being to unite the two properties. About seven years ago he died, leaving Grace, a girl, to the guardianship of her uncle, with this will: if on attaining the age of nineteen she would consent to marry me, I should receive those deeds, and all his property as her dowry; if she refused to comply with this condition, they should revert to my heir presumptive or apparent.—She consents.

COOL. Who would not?

SIR HARCOURT. I consent to receive her fifteen thousand pounds a year.

COOL (*aside*). Who would not?

SIR HARCOURT. So prepare, Cool, prepare. (*Crosses.*) But where is my boy? where is Charles?

COOL. Why—oh, he is gone out, Sir Harcourt; yes, gone out to take a walk.

SIR HARCOURT. Poor child! A perfect child in heart—a sober placid mind—the simplicity and verdure of boyhood, kept fresh and unsullied by any contact with society. Tell me, Cool, at what time was he in bed last night?

COOL. Half-past nine, Sir Harcourt.

SIR HARCOURT. Half-past nine! Beautiful! What an original idea! Reposing in cherub slumbers, while all around him teems with drinking and debauchery. Primitive sweetness of nature! No pilot-coated bearskinned brawling.

COOL. Oh, Sir Harcourt!

SIR HARCOURT. No cigar smoking—

COOL. Faints at the smell of one.

SIR HARCOURT. No brandy-and-water bibbing—

COOL. Does n't know the taste of anything stronger than barley-water.

SIR HARCOURT. Never heard the clock strike twelve, except at noon.—In fact, he is my son, and became a gentleman by right of paternity. He inherited my manners.

Enter MARTIN.

MARTIN. Mr. Harkaway.

Enter MAX HARKAWAY.

MAX. Squire Harkaway, fellow, or Max Harkaway, another time. [MARTIN bows and exit. Ah! ha! Sir Harcourt, I'm devilish glad to see ye. Gi' me your fist. Dang it, but I'm glad to see ye! Let me see—six—seven years, or more, since we have met. How quickly they have flown.

SIR HARCOURT (*throwing off his studied manner*). Max, Max! give me your hand, old boy. (*Aside.*) Ah! he is glad to see me;—there is no fawning pretence about that squeeze. Cool, you may retire. [*Exit COOL.*

MAX. Why, you are looking quite rosy.

SIR HARCOURT. Ah, ah, rosy! Am I too florid?

MAX. Not a bit; not a bit.

SIR HARCOURT. I thought so. (*Aside.*) Cool said I had put too much on.

MAX. How comes it, Courtly, that you manage to retain your youth? See, I'm as grey as an old badger, or a wild rabbit—while you are as black as a young rook. I say, whose head grew your hair,—eh?

SIR HARCOURT. Permit me to remark that all the beauties of my person are of home manufacture. Why should you be surprised at my youth? I have scarcely thrown off the giddiness of a very boy—elasticity of limb—buoyancy of soul. Remark this position (*throws himself into an attitude*). I held that attitude for ten minutes at Lady Acid's last *reunion*, at the express desire of one of our first sculptors, while he was making a sketch of me for the Apollo.

MAX (*aside*). Making a butt of thee for their gibes.

SIR HARCOURT. Lady Sarah Sarcasm started up, and, pointing to my face, ejaculated, "Good gracious! Does not Sir Harcourt remind you of the countenance of Ajax, in the Pompeian portrait?"

MAX. Ajax!—humbug!

SIR HARCOURT. You are complimentary.

MAX. I'm a plain man, and always speak my mind. What's in a face or figure? Does a Grecian nose entail a good temper? Does a waspish waist indicate a good heart? or, do oily perfumed locks necessarily thatch a well-furnished brain?

SIR HARCOURT. It's an undeniable fact, *plain* people always praise the beauties of the *mind*.

MAX. Excuse the insinuation; I had thought the first Lady Courtly had surfeited you with beauty.

SIR HARCOURT. No; she lived fourteen months with me, and then eloped with an intimate friend. Etiquette compelled me to challenge the seducer; so I received satisfaction, and a bullet in my shoulder at the same time. However, I had the consolation of knowing that he was the handsomest man of the age. She did not insult me, by running away with a d——d ill-looking scoundrel.

MAX. That certainly was flattering.

SIR HARCOURT. I felt so, as I pocketed ten thousand pounds damages.

MAX. That must have been a great balm to your sore honour.

SIR HARCOURT. It was—Max, my honour would have died without it; for on that year the wrong horse won the Derby—by some mistake. It was one of the luckiest chances,—a thing that does not happen twice in a man's life,—the opportunity of getting rid of his wife and his debts at the same time.

MAX. Tell the truth, Courtly! Did you not feel a little frayed in your delicacy?—your honour, now? Eh?

SIR HARCOURT. Not a whit. Why should I? I married *money* and I received it,—virgin gold! My delicacy and honour had nothing to do with hers. The world pities the bereaved husband, when it should congratulate. No,—the affair made a sensation, and I was the object. Besides, it is vulgar to make a parade of one's feelings however acute they may be: impenetrability of countenance is the sure sign of your highly-bred man of fashion.

MAX. So, a man must, therefore, lose his wife and his money with a smile,—in fact, everything he possesses but his temper.

SIR HARCOURT. Exactly,—and greet ruin with *vive la bagatelle!* For example,—your modish beauty never discomposes the shape of her features with convulsive laughter. A smile rewards the *bon mot*, and also shows the whiteness of her teeth. She never weeps impromptu—tears might destroy the economy of her cheek. Scenes are vulgar,—hysterics obsolete: she exhibits a calm, placid impenetrable lake, whose surface is reflexion, but of unfathomable depth,—a statue, whose life is hypothetical and not a *primâ facie* fact. (*Crosses.*)

MAX. Well, give me the girl that will fly at your eyes in an argument, and stick to her point like a fox to his own tail.

SIR HARCOURT. But, etiquette! Max, remember etiquette.

MAX. Damn etiquette! I have seen a man who thought it sacrilege to eat fish with a knife, that would not scruple to rise up and rob his brother of his birth-right in a gambling-house. Your thorough-bred, well-blooded heart, will seldom kick over the traces of good feeling. That's my opinion, and I don't care who knows it.

SIR HARCOURT. Pardon me,—etiquette is the pulse of society, by regulating which the body politic is retained in health. I consider myself one of the faculty in the art.

MAX. Well, well, you are a living libel upon common sense, for you are old enough to know better.

SIR HARCOURT. Old enough! What do you mean? Old! I still retain all my little juvenile indiscretions, which your niece's beauties must teach me to discard. I have not sown my wild oats yet.

MAX. Time you did, at sixty-three.

SIR HARCOURT. Sixty-three! Good gracious!—forty—'pon my life! forty, next March.

MAX. Why, you are older than I am.

SIR HARCOURT. Oh! you are old enough to be my father.

MAX. Well, if I am, I am; that's etiquette, I suppose. Poor Grace! how often I have pitied her fate! That a young and beautiful creature should be driven into wretched splendour, or miserable poverty!

SIR HARCOURT. Wretched! Wherefore? Lady Courtly wretched! Impossible!

MAX. Will she not be compelled to marry you, whether she likes you or not?—a choice between you and poverty. (*Aside.*) And hang me if it is n't a tie! But why do you not introduce your son Charles to me? I have not seen him since he was a child. You would never permit him to accept any of my invitations to spend his vacation at Oak Hall,—of course, we shall have the pleasure of his company now.

SIR HARCOURT. He is not fit to enter society yet. He is a studious, sober boy.

MAX. Boy! Why, he's five and twenty.

SIR HARCOURT. Good gracious! Max, you will permit me to know my own son's age,—he is not twenty.

MAX. I'm dumb.

SIR HARCOURT. You will excuse me while I indulge in the process of dressing. Cool!

Enter COOL.

Prepare my toilet.

[*Exit COOL.*

That is a ceremony which, with me, supersedes all others. I consider it a duty which every gentleman owes to society, to render himself as agreeable an object as possible; and the least compliment a mortal can pay to nature, when she honours him by bestowing extra care in the manufacture of his person, is to display her taste to the best possible advantage; and so, *au revoir*. [*Exit.*

MAX (*sits to the right of table*). That's a good soul!—he has his faults, and who has not? Forty years of age! Oh, monstrous!—but he does look uncommonly young for sixty, spite of his foreign locks and complexion.

Enter DAZZLE.

DAZZLE. Who's my friend, with the stick and gaiters, I wonder—one of the family—the governor maybe.

MAX. Who's this? (*Rises.*) Oh, Charles—is that you, my boy? How are you? (*Aside.*) This is the boy.

DAZZLE. He knows me—he is too respectable for a bailiff. (*Aloud.*) How are you?

MAX. Your father has just left me.

DAZZLE (*aside*). The devil he has, he's been dead these ten years. Oh! I see, he thinks I'm young Courtly. (*Aloud.*) The honour you would confer on me, I must unwillingly disclaim,—I am not Mr. Courtly.

MAX. I beg pardon—a friend, I suppose.

DAZZLE. Oh, a most intimate friend—a friend of years—distantly related to the family—one of my ancestors married one of his. (*Aside.*) Adam and Eve.

MAX. Are you on a visit here?

DAZZLE. Yes. Oh! yes. (*Aside.*) Rather a short one, I'm afraid.

MAX (*aside*). This appears a dashing kind of fellow—as he is a friend of Sir Harcourt's I'll invite him to the wedding. (*Aloud.*) Sir, if you are not otherwise engaged, I shall feel honoured by your company at my house—Oak Hall, Gloucestershire.

DAZZLE. Your name is—

MAX. Harkaway—Mr. Harkaway.

DAZZLE. Harkaway—let me see—I ought to be related to the Harkaways, somehow.

MAX. A wedding is about to come off—will you take a part on the occasion?

DAZZLE. With pleasure;—any part but that of the husband.

MAX. Have you any previous engagement?

DAZZLE. I was thinking eh! Why, let me see. (*Aside.*) Promised to meet my tailor and his account to-morrow; however, I'll postpone that. (*Aloud.*) Have you good shooting?

MAX. Shooting! Why there's no shooting at this time of the year.

DAZZLE. Oh! I'm in no hurry—I can wait till the season, of course. I was only speaking precautionally—you have good shooting.

MAX. The best in the country.

DAZZLE. Make yourself comfortable! Say no more—I'm your man—wait till you see how I'll murder your preserves.

MAX. Do you hunt?

DAZZLE. Pardon me—but will you repeat that? (*Aside.*) Delicious and expensive idea.

MAX. You ride?

DAZZLE. Anything!—everything! From a blood to a broomstick. Only catch me a flash of lightning, and let me get on the back of it, and dam'me if I would n't astonish the elements.

MAX. Ha! Ha!

DAZZLE. I'd put a girdle round about the earth, in very considerably less than forty minutes.

MAX. Ah! ah! We'll show old Fiddlestrings how to spend the day. He imagines that nature, at the earnest request of Fashion, made summer days long for him to saunter in the Park, and winter nights, that he might have good time to get cleared out at hazard or at whist. Give me the yelping of a pack of hounds before the shuffling of a pack of cards. What state can match the chase in full cry, each vying with his fellow which shall be most happy? A thousand deaths fly by unheeded in that one hour's life of ecstasy. Time is outrun, and Nature seems to grudge our bliss in making the day so short.

DAZZLE. No, for then rises up the idol of my great adoration.

MAX. Who's that?

DAZZLE. The bottle; that lends a lustre to the soul, when the world puts on its nightcap and extinguishes the sun—then comes the bottle. Oh, mighty wine! Don't ask me to apostrophise. Wine and love are the only two indescribable things in nature; but I prefer the wine,

because its consequences are not entailed, and are more easily got rid of.

MAX. How so?

DAZZLE. Love ends in matrimony, wine in soda water.

MAX. Well, I can promise you as fine a bottle as ever was cracked.

DAZZLE. Never mind the bottle, give me the wine. Say no more, but, when I arrive, just shake one of my hands, and put the key of the cellar into the other, and if I don't make myself intimately acquainted with its internal organization—well, I say nothing, time will show.

MAX. I foresee some happy days.

DAZZLE. And I some glorious nights.

MAX. It must n't be a flying visit.

DAZZLE. I despise the word—I'll stop a month with you.

MAX. Or a year or two.

DAZZLE. I'll live and die with you.

MAX. Ha! ha! Remember, Max Harkaway, Oak Hall, Gloucestershire.

DAZZLE. I'll remember—fare ye well. (MAX is going.) I say, holloa!—Tallyho—o—o—o!

MAX. Yoicks!—Tallyho—o—o—o! [Exit.]

DAZZLE. There I am, quartered for a couple of years at the least. The old boy wants somebody to ride his horses, shoot his game, and keep a restraint on the morals of the parish: I'm eligible. What a lucky accident to meet young Courtly last night! Who could have thought it?—yesterday, I could not make certain of a dinner, except at my own proper peril;—to-day, I would flirt with a banquet.

Enter CHARLES COURTLY.

COURTLY. What infernal row was that? Why, (seeing DAZZLE) are you here still?

DAZZLE. Yes. Ain't you delighted? I'll ring and send the servant for my luggage.

COURTLY. The devil you will! Why, you don't mean to say you seriously intend to take up a permanent residence here? (*He rings bell.*)

DAZZLE. Now, that's a most inhospitable insinuation.

COURTLY. Might I ask your name?

DAZZLE. With a deal of pleasure—Richard Dazzle, late of the Unattached Volunteers, vulgarly entitled the Dirty Buffs.

Enter MARTIN.

COURTLY. Then, Mr. Richard Dazzle, I have the honour of wishing you a very good morning. Martin, show this gentleman the door.

DAZZLE. If he does, I'll kick Martin out of it.—No offence. [*Exit MARTIN.*

Now, sir, permit me to place a dioramic view of your conduct before you. After bringing you safely home this morning—after indulgently waiting whenever you took a passing fancy to a knocker or bell-pull—after conducting a retreat that would have reflected honor on Napoleon—you would kick me into the street, like a mangy cur: and that's what you call gratitude. Now, to show you how superior I am to petty malice, I give you an unlimited invitation to my house—my country house—to remain as long as you please.

COURTLY. Your house!

DAZZLE. Oak Hall, Gloucestershire—fine old place—for further particulars see Road-book; that is, it *nominally* belongs to my old friend and relation, Max Harkaway; but I'm privileged—capital old fellow—say, shall we be honoured?

COURTLY. Sir, permit me to hesitate a moment. (*Aside.*) Let me see—I go back to college to-morrow, so I shall not be missing; tradesmen begin to dun.

[*A noise between MARTIN and ISAACS; COOL has entered, crosses, and goes off.*

I hear thunder; here is shelter ready for me.

Re-enter COOL.

COOL. Oh, Mr. Charles, Mr. Solomon Isaacs is in the hall, and swears he will remain till he has arrested you!

COURTLY. Does he!—sorry he is so obstinate—take him my compliments, and I will bet him five to one he will not.

DAZZLE. Double or quits, with my kind regards.

COOL. But, sir, he has discovered the house in Curzon-street; he says, he is aware the furniture, at least, belongs to you, and he will put a man in immediately.

COURTLY. That's awkward—what's to be done?

DAZZLE. Ask him whether he could n't make it a woman?

COURTLY. I must trust that to fate.

DAZZLE. I will give you my acceptance, if it will be of any use to you; it is of none to me.

COURTLY. No, sir; but in reply to your most generous and kind invitation, if you be in earnest, I shall feel delighted to accept it.

DAZZLE. Certainly.

COURTLY. Then, off we go—through the stables—down the mews, and so slip through my friend's fingers.

DAZZLE. But, stay, you must do the polite; say farewell to him before you part. Hang it, don't cut him.

COURTLY. You jest!

DAZZLE. Here, lend me a card. (COURTLY gives him one.) Now, then, (writes) "Our respects to Mr. Isaacs—sorry to have been prevented from seeing him."—Ha! ha!

COURTLY. Ha! ha!

DAZZLE. We'll send him up some game.

COURTLY. Don't let my father see him. [Exeunt.

COOL. What's this?—"Mr. Charles Courtly, P.P.C., returns thanks for obliging inquiries." [Exit.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The Lawn before Oak Hall, a fine Elizabethan mansion; a drawing room is seen through large French windows at the back. Statues, urns, and garden-chairs, about the stage.*

Enter PERT through window, to JAMES who is discovered.

PERT. James, Miss Grace desires me to request that you will watch at the avenue, and let her know when the squire's carriage is seen on the London road.

JAMES. I will go to the lodge. [Exit.

PERT. How I do long to see what kind of a man Sir Harcourt Courtly is. They say he is sixty; so he must be old, and consequentially ugly. If I were Miss Grace I would rather give up all my fortune and marry the man I liked, than go to church with a stuffed eel-skin. But taste is everything;—she does n't seem to care

whether he is sixty or sixteen; jokes at love; prepares for matrimony as she would for dinner; says it is a necessary evil, and what can't be cured must be endured. Now, I say this is against all nature; and she is either no woman, or a deeper one than I am, if she prefers an old man to a young one.

Enter GRACE through window.

Here she comes, looking as cheerfully as if she was going to marry Mr. Jenks—my Mr. Jenks! whom nobody won't lead to the halter till I have that honor.

GRACE. Well, Pert, any sign of my uncle yet?

PERT. No, Miss Grace; but James has gone to watch the road.

GRACE. In my uncle's letter, he mentions a Mr. Dazzle, whom he has invited, so you must tell Mrs. Howton to prepare a room for him. He is some friend of my husband that is to be, and my uncle seems to have taken an extraordinary predilection for him. Apropos! I must not forget to have a flower for the dear old man when he arrives.

PERT. The dear old man! Do you mean Sir Harcourt?

GRACE. Law, no! my uncle, of course (*plucking flowers from bed*). What do I care for Sir Harcourt Courtly?

PERT. Isn't it odd, Miss, you have never seen your intended, though it has been so long since you were betrothed.

GRACE. Not at all; marriage matters are conducted now-a-days in a most mercantile manner; consequently a previous acquaintance is by no means indispensable. Besides, my prescribed husband has been upon the Continent for the benefit of his—property! They say a southern climate is a great restorer of consumptive estates.

PERT. Well, Miss, for my own part I should like to have a good look at my bargain before I paid for it; 'specially when one's life is the price of the article. But why, ma'am, do you consent to marry in this blind-man's-buff sort of manner? What would you think if he were not quite so old?

GRACE. I should think he was a little younger.

PERT. Well, *I* should like him all the better.

GRACE. That wouldn't I. A young husband might expect affection and nonsense, which 't would be deceit in me to render; nor would he permit me to remain with

my uncle.—Sir Harcourt takes me with the incumbrances on his estate, and I shall beg to be left among the rest of the live stock. (*Crosses.*)

PERT. Ah, Miss! but some day you might chance to stumble over *the* man,—what could you do then?

GRACE. Do! beg *the* man's pardon, and request *the* man to pick me up again.

PERT. Ah! you were never in love, Miss?

GRACE. No! nor ever will be, till I am tired of myself and common sense. Love is a pleasant scape-goat for a little epidemic madness. I must have been inoculated in my infancy, for the infection passes over poor me in contempt.

Enter JAMES.

JAMES. Two gentlemen, Miss Grace, have just alighted.

GRACE. Very well, James. [*Exit JAMES.*

Pert, remember, this as a maxim,—A woman is always in love with one of two things.

PERT. What are they, Miss?

GRACE. A man, or herself,—and I know which is the most profitable. [*Exit.*

Pert. I wonder what my Jenks would say, if I was to ask him. Law! here comes Mr. Meddle, his rival, contemporary solicitor, as he calls him,—a nasty, prying, ugly wretch, what brings him here; he comes puffed with some news. (*Retires.*)

Enter MEDDLE, with a newspaper.

MEDDLE. I have secured the only newspaper in the village—my character as an attorney-at-law depended on the monopoly of its information. I took it up by chance, when this paragraph met my astonished view: (*reads*) "We understand that the contract of marriage so long in abeyance on account of the lady's minority, is about to be celebrated, at Oak Hall, Gloucestershire, the well-known and magnificent mansion of Maximilian Harkaway, Esq., between Sir Harcourt Courtly, Baronet, of fashionable celebrity, and Miss Grace Harkaway, niece to Mr. Harkaway. The preparations are proceeding on the good old English style." Is it possible! I seldom swear except in a witness box, but, damme, had it been known in the village, my reputation would have been lost; my voice in the parlour of the Red Lion mute, and Jenks, a fellow who calls himself a lawyer, without more capability than a broomstick, and as much impudence as a young barrister, after getting a verdict, by mistake; why, he would actually

have taken the Reverend Mr. Spout by the button, which is now my sole privilege. Ah! here is Mrs. Pert; could n't have hit upon a better person. I'll cross-examine her—Lady's maid to Miss Grace, confidential purloiner of second-hand silk—a *nisi prius* of her mistress—Ah! sits on the woolsack in the pantry, and dictates the laws of kitchen etiquette.—Ah! Mrs. Pert, good morning; permit me to say,—and my word as a legal character is not unduly considered—I venture to affirm, that you look a—quite like the—a——

PERT. Law! Mr. Meddle.

MEDDLE. Yes, that's it.—Exactly like the Law.

PERT. Ha! indeed; complimentary, I confess; like the law; tedious, prosy, made up of musty paper. You shan't have a long suit of me. Good morning! [*Going.*]

MEDDLE. Stay, Mrs. Pert; don't calumniate my calling, or disseminate vulgar prejudices.

PERT. Vulgar! you talk of vulgarity to me; you, whose sole employment is to sneak about like a pig, snouting out the dust-hole of society, and feeding upon the bad ends of vice; you, who live upon the world's iniquity; you miserable specimen of a bad six-and-eight-pence. [*Following him round.*]

MEDDLE. But, Mrs. Pert——

PERT. Don't but me, sir; I won't be butted by any such low fellow.

MEDDLE. This is slander; an action will lie.

PERT. Let it lie; lying is your trade. I'll tell you what, Mr. Meddle: if I had my will, I would soon put a check on your prying propensities. I'd treat you as the farmers do the inquisitive hogs.

MEDDLE. How?

PERT. I would ring your nose. [*Exit, into house.*]

MEDDLE. Not much information elicited from that witness. Jenks is at the bottom of this. I have very little hesitation in saying, Jenks is a libellous rascal; I heard reports that he was undermining my character here, through Mrs. Pert. Now I'm certain of it; assault is expensive; but I certainly will put by a small weekly stipendium, until I can afford to kick Jenks.

DAZZLE (*outside*). Come along; this way!

MEDDLE. Ah! whom have we here. Visitors; I'll address them.

Enter DAZZLE.

DAZZLE. Who's this, I wonder; one of the family? I must know him. (*To MEDDLE.*) Ah! how are ye?

MEDDLE. Quite well. Just arrived?—ah!—um!—
Might I request the honour of knowing whom I address?

DAZZLE. Richard Dazzle, Esquire; and you——

MEDDLE. Mark Meddle, Attorney at Law.

Enter CHARLES COURTLY.

DAZZLE. What detained you?

COURTLY. My dear fellow, I have just seen such a woman!

DAZZLE (*aside*). Hush! (*aloud*.) Permit me to introduce you to my very old friend, Meddle. He's a capital fellow; know him.

MEDDLE. I feel honoured. Who is your friend?

DAZZLE. Oh, he? What, my friend? Oh! Augustus Hamilton.

COURTLY. How d'ye do? (MEDDLE *attempts to shake hands—looking off*.) There she is, again!

MEDDLE (*looking off*). Why, that is Miss Grace.

DAZZLE. Of course, Grace.

COURTLY. I'll go and introduce myself.

[DAZZLE *stops him*.

DAZZLE (*aside*). What are you about? would you insult my old friend, Puddle, by running away? (*Aloud*.) I say, Puddle, Mud-Puddle, just show my friend the lions, while I say how d'ye do, to my young friend, Grace. (*Aside*.) Cultivate his acquaintance.

[*Exit, COURTLY looks after him.*

MEDDLE. Mr. Hamilton, might I take the liberty?

COURTLY (*looking off*). Confound the fellow.

MEDDLE. Sir, what did you remark?

COURTLY. She's gone! Oh, are you here still, Mr. Thingomerry Puddle?

MEDDLE. Meddle, sir, Meddle, in the list of Attorneys.

COURTLY. Well, Muddle or Puddle, or whoever you are, you are a bore.

MEDDLE (*aside*). How excessively odd! Mrs. Pert said I was a pig; now I'm a boar; a wonder what they'll make of me next.

COURTLY. Mr. Thingamy, will you take a word of advice?

MEDDLE. Feel honoured.

COURTLY. Get out.

MEDDLE. Hollo! do you mean to—I don't understand.

COURTLY. Delighted to quicken your apprehension. You are an ass, Puddle.

MEDDLE. Ha! ha! another quadruped! Yes; beautiful. (*Aside.*) I wish he'd call me something libellous: but that would be too much to expect. (*Aloud.*) Anything else?

COURTLY. Some miserable pettifogging scoundrel!

MEDDLE. Good! Ha! ha!

COURTLY. What do you mean by laughing at me?

MEDDLE. Ha! ha! ha! excellent! delicious!

COURTLY. Mr.—are you ambitious of a kicking?

MEDDLE. Very, very—Go on—kick—go on.

COURTLY (*looking off*). Here she comes! I'll speak to her.

MEDDLE. But, sir—sir——

COURTLY. Oh, go to the devil! (*He runs off.*)

MEDDLE. There, there's a chance lost—gone! I have no hesitation in saying, that in another minute I should have been kicked; literally kicked,—a legal luxury!—costs, damages, and actions rose up like sky-rockets in my aspiring soul; with golden tails reaching to the infinity of my hopes. (*Looking.*) They are coming this way. Mr. Hamilton, in close conversation with Lady Courtly, that is to be.—Crim. Con.—Courtly versus Hamilton,—damages problematical—Meddle, chief witness for Plaintiff—guinea a day—professional man! I'll take down their conversation verbatim. [*He retires.*]

Enter GRACE followed by COURTLY.

GRACE. Perhaps you would follow your friend into the dining-room: refreshment after your long journey must be requisite.

COURTLY. Pardon me, madam; but the lovely garden and the loveliness before me is better refreshment than I could procure in any dining-room.

GRACE. Ha! Your company and compliments arrive together.

COURTLY. I trust that a passing remark will not spoil so welcome an introduction as this by offending you.

GRACE. I am not certain that anything you could say would offend me.

COURTLY. I never meant——

GRACE. I thought not. In turn pardon me, when I request you will commence your visit with this piece of information, I consider compliments impertinent and sweet-meat language fulsome.

COURTLY. I would condemn my tongue to a Pythagorean silence if I thought it could attempt to flatter.

GRACE. It strikes me, sir, that you are a stray bee from the hive of fashion; if so, reserve your honey for its proper cell. A truce to compliments. You have just arrived *from town*, I apprehend.

COURTLY. This moment I left mighty London, under the fever of a full season, groaning with the noisy pulse of wealth and the giddy whirling brain of fashion. Enchanting, busy London! how have I prevailed on myself to desert you! Next week the new ballet comes out,—the week after comes Ascot,—oh!

GRACE. How agonising must be the reflection.

COURTLY. Torture! Can you inform me how you manage to avoid suicide here? If there was but an opera even within twenty miles—we could n't get up a rustic ballet among the village girls? No!—ah?

GRACE. I am afraid you would find that difficult. How I contrive to support life I don't know—it is wonderful—but I have not precisely contemplated suicide yet, nor do I miss the opera.

COURTLY. How can you manage to kill time?

GRACE. I can't. Men talk of killing time, while time quietly kills them. I have many employments—this week I devote to study and various amusements—next week to being married—the following week to repentance perhaps.

COURTLY. Married!

GRACE. You seem surprised; I believe it is of frequent occurrence in the metropolis—Is it not?

COURTLY. Oh, yes, I believe they do it, there. Might I ask to whom?

GRACE. I have never seen him yet, but he's a gentleman who has been strongly recommended to me for the situation of husband.

COURTLY. What an extraordinary match! Would you not consider it advisable to see him, previous to incurring the consequence of such an act?

GRACE. You must be aware that fashion says otherwise. The gentleman swears eternal devotion to the lady's fortune, and the lady swears she will outvie him still. My lord's horses, and my lady's diamonds, shine through a few seasons, until a seat in Parliament, or the continent, stares them in the face; then, when thrown upon each other for resources of comfort, they begin to quarrel about the original conditions of the sale.

COURTLY. Sale! No! that would be degrading civilization into Turkish barbarity.

GRACE. Worse, sir, a great deal worse; for there at

least they do not attempt concealment of the barter, but here, every London ball-room is a marriage mart—young ladies are trotted out, while the mother, father, or chaperone plays auctioneer, and knocks them down to the highest bidder,—young men are ticketed up with their fortunes on their backs,—and love, turned into a dapper shopman, descants on the excellent qualities of the material.

COURTLY. Oh! that such a custom could have ever emanated from the healthy soil of an English heart.

GRACE. It never did—like most of our literary dandyisms and dandy literature, it was borrowed from the French.

COURTLY. You seem to laugh at love.

GRACE. Love! why the very word is a breathing satire upon man's reason—a mania, indigenous to humanity—nature's jester, who plays off tricks upon the world, and trips up common sense. When I'm in love I'll write an almanack, for every lack of wit—prognosticate the sighing season—when to beware of tears—about this time, expect matrimony to be prevalent! Ha! ha! Why should I lay out my life in love's bonds upon the bare security of a man's word?

Enter JAMES.

JAMES. The Squire, Madam, has just arrived, and another gentleman with him. *[Exit JAMES.]*

GRACE (*aside*). My intended, I suppose.

COURTLY. I perceive you are one of the railers against what is termed the follies of high life.

GRACE. No, not particularly; I deprecate all folly. By what prerogative can the west end mint issue absurdity which, if coined in the east, would be voted vulgar.

COURTLY. By a sovereign right—because it has Fashion's head upon its side, and that stamps it current.

GRACE. Poor fashion, for how many sins hast thou to answer!

COURTLY. Is this idol of the world so radically vicious?

GRACE. No; the root is well enough, as the body was, until it had outgrown its native soil, but now, like a mighty giant lying over Europe, it pillows its head in Italy, its heart in France, leaving the heels alone for poor little England.

COURTLY. Pardon me, madam, you wrong yourself to

rail against your own inheritance—the kingdom to which loveliness and wit attest your title.

GRACE. A mighty realm, foorsooth—with milliners for ministers, a cabinet of coxcombs, envy for my homage, ruin for my revenue—my right of rule depending on the shape of a bonnet or the sit of a pelisse, with the next grand noodle as my heir-apparent. Mr. Hamilton, when I am crowned, I shall feel happy to abdicate in your favour. [*Curtseys, and exit into house.*]

COURTLY. What did she mean by that? Hang me if I can understand her—she is evidently not used to society. Ha!—takes every word I say for infallible truth—requires the solution of a compliment, as if it were a problem in Euclid. She said she was about to marry, but I rather imagine she was in jest. 'Pon my life I feel very queer at the contemplation of such an idea—I'll follow her.

MEDDLE comes down.

Oh! perhaps this booby can inform me something about her. (MEDDLE makes signs at him.) What the devil is he at?

MEDDLE. It won't do—no—ah! um—it's not to be done.

COURTLY. What do you mean?

MEDDLE (*points after her*). Counsel retained—cause to come off.

COURTLY. Cause to come off!

MEDDLE. Miss Grace is about to be married.

COURTLY. Is it possible?

MEDDLE. Certainly. If *I* have the drawing out of the deeds——

COURTLY. To whom?

MEDDLE. Oh, I dare say! Ha! Hem! Oh yes! I dare say—Information being scarce in the market I hope to make mine valuable.

COURTLY. Married! married! I've a great mind.

[*Pacing the stage.*]

MEDDLE. Now I shall have another chance.

COURTLY. I'll run and ascertain the truth of this from Dazzle. [*Exit.*]

MEDDLE. It's of no use, he either dare not kick me, or he can't afford it—in either case, he is beneath my notice. Ah! who comes here—can it be Sir Harcourt Courtly himself? It can be no other.

Enter COOL.

Sir, I have the honour to bid you welcome to Oak Hall and the village of Oldborough.

COOL (*aside*). Excessively polite. (*Aloud.*) Sir, thank you.

MEDDLE. The township contains two thousand inhabitants.

COOL. Does it! I am delighted to hear it. (*Crosses.*)

MEDDLE (*aside*). I can charge him for that—ahem—six and eightpence is not much—but it is a beginning. (*Aloud.*) If you will permit me I can inform you of the different commodities for which it is famous.

COOL. Much obliged—but here comes Sir Harcourt Courtly, my master, and Mr. Harkaway—any other time, I shall feel delighted.

MEDDLE. Oh! (*Aside.*) Mistook the man for the master. [*He retires up.*]

Enter MAX and SIR HARCOURT.

MAX. Here we are at last. Now give ye welcome to Oak Hall, Sir Harcourt, heartily.

SIR HARCOURT (*languidly*). Cool, assist me.

[COOL, *takes off his furred cloak, gloves; gives him white gloves, and a white handkerchief, then places a flower in his coat.*]

MAX. Why you require unpacking as carefully as my best bin of port. Well, now you are decanted, tell me what did you think of my park as we came along?

SIR HARCOURT. That it would never come to an end. You said it was only a stone's throw from your infernal lodge to the house; why it's ten miles at least.

MAX. I'll do it in ten minutes any day.

SIR HARCOURT. Yes, in a steam carriage. Cool, perfume my handkerchief.

MAX. Don't do it. Don't! perfume in the country! why it's high treason in the very face of Nature; 't is introducing the robbed to the robber. Here are the sweets from which your fulsome essences are pilfered, and libelled with their names,—don't insult them too.

SIR HARCOURT (*to MEDDLE who is by a rose bush*). Oh! cull me a bouquet, my man!

MAX (*turning*). Ah Meddle! how are you? This is Lawyer Meddle. [*Goes up.*]

SIR HARCOURT. Oh! I took him for one of your people.

MEDDLE. Ah! naturally—um—Sir Harcourt Courtly,

I have the honour to congratulate — happy occasion approaches. Ahem! I have no hesitation in saying this *very* happy occasion approaches.

SIR HARCOURT. Cool, is the conversation addressed towards me?

COOL. I believe so, Sir Harcourt.

MEDDLE. Oh, certainly! I was complimenting you.

SIR HARCOURT. Sir, you are very good: the honour is undeserved; but I am only in the habit of receiving compliments from the fair sex. Men's admiration is so damnably insipid. (*Crosses to MAX, who is seated on a bench.*) If the future Lady Courtly be visible at so unfashionable an hour as this, I shall beg to be introduced.

MAX. Visible! Ever since six this morning. — I'll warrant ye. Two to one she is at dinner.

SIR HARCOURT. Dinner! Is it possible! Lady Courtly dine at half-past one P.M.!

MEDDLE (*down*). I rather prefer that hour to peck a little my —

SIR HARCOURT. Dear me! who was addressing you?

MEDDLE. Oh! I beg pardon.

MAX. Here, James!

[*Calling.*]

Enter JAMES from room.

Tell Miss Grace to come here directly.

[*Exit JAMES into house.*]

Now prepare, Courtly, for, though I say it, she is—with the exception of my bay mare Kitty—the handsomest thing in the country. Considering she is a biped she is a wonder! Full of blood, sound wind and limb, plenty of bone, sweet coat, in fine condition, with a thoroughbred step, as dainty as a pet greyhound.

SIR HARCOURT. Don't compare her to a horse.

MAX. Well, I would n't, but she's almost as fine a creature,—close similarities.

MEDDLE. Oh, very fine creature! Close similarity amounting to identity.

SIR HARCOURT. Good gracious, sir! What can a lawyer know about woman?

MEDDLE. Everything. The consistorial court is fine study of the character, and I have no hesitation in saying that I have examined more women than Jenks or

SIR HARCOURT. Oh, Damn Jenks!

MEDDLE. Sir, thank you. Damn him again, sir, damn him again.

Enter GRACE, from house.

GRACE (*runs to him*). My dear uncle!

MAX. Ah Grace! you little jade, come here.

SIR HARCOURT (*eyeing her through his glass*). Oh, dear! she is a rural Venus! I'm astonished and delighted.

MAX. Won't you kiss your old uncle? (*He kisses her.*)

SIR HARCOURT (*draws an agonizing face*). Oh!—ah—um!—*N'importe!*—my privilege in embryo—hem! It's very tantalizing though.

MAX. You are not glad to see me, you are not. (*Kissing her.*)

SIR HARCOURT. Oh! no, no, (*aside*) that is too much I shall do something horrible presently, if this goes on (*Aloud.*) I should be sorry to curtail any little ebullition of affection; but—ahem! May I be permitted?

MAX. Of course you may. There, Grace, is Sir Harcourt, your husband that will be. Go to him, girl. (*She curtseys.*)

SIR HARCOURT. Permit me to do homage to the charms, the presence of which have placed me in sight of paradise. [SIR HARCOURT and GRACE retire.]

Enter DAZZLE, from house.

DAZZLE. Ah! old fellow, how are you? (*Crosses to him.*)

MAX. I'm glad to see you! are you comfortably quartered, yet, eh?

DAZZLE. Splendidly quartered! What a place you've got here. Why it's a palace. Here, Hamilton.

Enter CHARLES COURTLY, from house; COOL sees him and looks astonished.

Permit me to introduce my friend, Augustus Hamilton. (*Aside.*) Capital fellow! drinks like a sieve, and rides like a thunder-storm.

MAX (*crosses*). Sir, I'm devilish glad to see you. Here, Sir Harcourt, permit me to introduce to you—(*goes up stage to SIR HARCOURT.*)

COURTLY. The devil!

DAZZLE (*aside*). What's the matter?

COURTLY (*aside*). Why, that is my governor, by Jupiter!

DAZZLE (*aside*). What, old Whiskers! you don't say that!

COURTLY (*aside*). It is! what's to be done now?

DAZZLE. Oh, I don't know.

MAX (*advancing*). Mr. Hamilton, Sir Harcourt Courtly—Sir Harcourt Courtly, Mr. Hamilton.

SIR HARCOURT (*advancing*). Hamilton! Good gracious! bless me—why, Charles, is it possible—why, Max, that's my son!

MAX. Your son!

GRACE. Your son, Sir Harcourt! have you a son as old as that gentleman?

SIR HARCOURT. No—that is—a—yes,—not by twenty years—a—Charles, why don't you answer me, sir?

COURTLY (*aside to DAZZLE*). What shall I say?

DAZZLE (*aside*). Deny your identity.

COURTLY (*aside*). Capital!—(*pause—they look at each other—aloud*). What's the matter, sir?

SIR HARCOURT. How came you down here, sir?

COURTLY. By one of Newman's best fours—in twelve hours and a quarter.

SIR HARCOURT. Is n't your name Charles Courtly?

COURTLY. Not to my knowledge.

SIR HARCOURT. Do you mean to say you are usually called Augustus Hamilton?

COURTLY. Lamentable fact—and quite correct.

DAZZLE. How very odd!

SIR HARCOURT. Well, I never—Cool, is that my son?

COOL. No, sir—that is not Mr. Charles—but is *very* like him.

MAX. I cannot understand all this. { [*Go up a little.*

GRACE (*aside*). I think I can.

DAZZLE (*aside to COURTLY*). Give him a touch of the indignant.

COURTLY (*crosses*). Allow me to say what, Sir What-d'ye-call'em—Carthorse Hartly?

DAZZLE. Sir Walker Cartly.

SIR HARCOURT. Hartly, sir! Courtly, sir. Courtly!

COURTLY. Well, Hartly, or Court-heart, or whatever your name may be, I say your conduct is—a—a—, and was it not for the presence of this lady, I should feel inclined—to—to——.

SIR HARCOURT. No, no, that can't be my son,—he never would address me in that way.—Sir, your likeness to my son Charles is so astonishing, that it for a moment—the equilibrium of my etiquette—'pon my life I—permit me to request your pardon.

MEDDLE. Sir Harcourt, don't apologise, don't—bring an action. I'm witness.

SIR HARCOURT. Some one take this man away.

[MEDDLE goes up the stage with COOL.

Enter JAMES, from house.

JAMES. Luncheon is on the table, sir.

SIR HARCOURT. Miss Harkaway, I never swore before a lady, in my life—except when I promised to love and cherish the late Lady Courtly, which I took care to preface with an apology,—I was compelled to the ceremony, and consequently not answerable for the language—but to that gentleman's identity I would have pledged—my hair.

GRACE (*aside*). If that security were called for, I suspect the answer would be—no effects.

[*Exeunt SIR HARCOURT and GRACE into house.*

MEDDLE (*to MAX*). I have something very particular to communicate.

MAX. Can't listen at present. [*Exit into house.*

MEDDLE (*to DAZZLE and COURTLY*). I can afford you information which I——

DAZZLE. Oh, don't bother! }

COURTLY. Go to the devil! }

Exeunt into house.

MEDDLE. Now, I have no hesitation in saying that is the height of ingratitude.—Oh—Mr. Cool—can you oblige me. (*Presents his account.*)

COOL. Why, what is all this?

MEDDLE. Small account *versus* you—to giving information concerning the last census of the population of Oldborough and vicinity, six and eight-pence.

COOL. Oh, you mean to make me pay this, do you?

MEDDLE. Unconditionally.

COOL. Well, I have no objection—the charge is fair—but remember, I am a servant on board wages,—will you throw in a little advice gratis—if I give you the money.

MEDDLE. Ahem!—I will.

COOL. A fellow has insulted me. I want to abuse him—what terms are actionable?

MEDDLE. You may call him anything you please, providing there are no witnesses.

COOL. Oh, may I? (*Looks round.*) Then—you rascally petti-fogging scoundrel!

MEDDLE. Hallo! (*Retreats.*)

COOL (*following him*). You mean—dirty—disgrace to your profession.

MEDDLE. Libel—slander——

COOL (*going up, turns*). Aye, but where are your witnesses?

MEDDLE. Give me the costs—six and eight-pence.

COOL. I deny that you gave me information at all.

MEDDLE. You do!

COOL. Yes, where are your witnesses?

[*Exit into house.*]

MEDDLE. Ah—damme! I'm done at last! [*Exit.*]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*A Morning-room in Oak Hall, French windows opening to the lawn, handsome pier glasses, ottomans, &c., round the stage; windows, fire-place, and door of entrance.*

MAX and SIR HARCOURT seated together; DAZZLE; GRACE and YOUNG COURTLY are playing at chess at back. All dressed for dinner.

MAX (*aside to SIR HARCOURT*). What can I do?

SIR HARCOURT. Get rid of them civilly.

MAX. What, turn them out, after I particularly invited them to stay a month or two?

SIR HARCOURT. Why, they are disreputable characters; as for that young fellow, in whom my Lady Courtly appears so particularly absorbed,—I am bewildered—I have written to town for my Charles, my boy,—it certainly is the most extraordinary likeness——

DAZZLE. Sir Harcourt, I have an idea——

SIR HARCOURT. Sir, I am delighted to hear it.—

(*Aside.*) That fellow is a swindler.

MAX. I met him at your house.

SIR HARCOURT. Never saw him before in all my life.

DAZZLE (*crosses to SIR HARCOURT*). I will bet you five to one, that I can beat you three out of four games at billiards, with one hand.

SIR HARCOURT. No, sir.

DAZZLE. I don't mind giving you ten points in fifty.

SIR HARCOURT. Sir, I never gamble.

DAZZLE. You don't! Well, I'll teach you—easiest thing in life—you have every requisite—good temper.

SIR HARCOURT. I have not, sir.

DAZZLE. A long-headed knowing old buck.

SIR HARCOURT. Sir. (*Converses with MAX.*)

GRACE. Really, Mr. Hamilton, you improve.—A young man pays us a visit, as you half intimate, to escape inconvenient friends—that is complimentary to us, his hosts.

COURTLY. Nay, that is too severe.

GRACE. After an acquaintanceship of two days, you sit down to teach me chess, and domestic economy at the same time.—Might I ask where you graduated in that science—where you learned all that store of matrimonial advice which you have obliged me with?

COURTLY. I inhibited it, Madam, from the moment I beheld you, and having studied my subject con-amore, took my degrees from your eyes.

GRACE. Oh, I see you are a Master of Arts already.

COURTLY. Unfortunately, no—I shall remain a bachelor—till you can assist me to that honour.

[SIR HARCOURT rises.]

DAZZLE (*aside*). How do you get on?

COURTLY (*aside*). Splendidly!—keep the old boy away.

SIR HARCOURT (*going to them*). Is the conversation strictly confidential?—or might I join.

DAZZLE (*crosses to him*). Oh, not in the least, my dear sir—we were remarking, that rifle shooting was an excellent diversion during the summer months.

SIR HARCOURT (*drawing himself up*). Sir! I was addressing——

DAZZLE. And I was saying, what a pity it was I could n't find any one reasonable enough to back his opinion with long odds—come out on the lawn, and pitch up your hat, and I will hold you ten to one I put a bullet in it every time, at forty paces.

SIR HARCOURT. No, sir—I consider you——

MAX (*at window*). Here all of you—look here is Lady Gay Spanker, coming across the lawn at a hand gallop!

SIR HARCOURT (*running to the window*). Bless me, the horse is running away!

MAX. Look how she takes that fence! there's a seat.

SIR HARCOURT (*comes down*). Lady Gay Spanker.—Who may she be?

GRACE (*down*). Gay Spanker, Sir Harcourt? My cousin, and dearest friend—you *must* like her.

SIR HARCOURT. It will be my devoir, since it is your wish—though it will be a hard task in your presence.

GRACE. I am sure she will like *you*.

SIR HARCOURT. Ha! ha! I flatter myself.

COURTLY. Who, and what is she?

GRACE. Glee, glee made a living thing—nature in some frolic mood shut up a merry devil in her eye, and spiting Art stole joy's brightest harmony to thrill her laugh which peals out sorrow's knell. Her cry rings loudest in the field—the very echo loves it best, and as each hill attempts to ape her voice, earth seems to laugh that it made a thing so glad.

MAX. Ay, the merriest minx I ever kissed. (LADY GAY *laughs without*).

LADY GAY (*without*). Max!

MAX. Come in, you mischievous puss.

Enter JAMES.

JAMES. Mr. Adolphus, and Lady Gay Spanker.

Enter LADY GAY, fully equipped in riding habit, &c.

LADY GAY. Ha! ha! Well, governor, how are ye? I have been down five times, climbing up your stairs in my long clothes. How are you, Grace, dear? (*Kisses her.*) There, don't fidget, Max—and there—(*kisses him*)—there's one for you.

SIR HARCOURT. Ahem!

LADY GAY. Oh, gracious! I didn't see you had visitors.

MAX. Permit me to introduce—(*crosses*)—Sir Harcourt Courtly, Lady Gay Spanker. Mr. Dazzle, Mr. Hamilton—Lady Gay Spanker.

SIR HARCOURT (*aside*). A devilish fine woman!

DAZZLE (*aside to SIR HARCOURT*). She is a devilish fine woman.

LADY GAY. You mustn't think anything of the liberties I take with my old papa here,—bless him! (*Kisses him again*).

SIR HARCOURT. Oh no! (*Aside.*) I only thought I should like to be in his place.

LADY GAY. I am so glad you have come, Sir Harcourt. Now we shall be able to make a decent figure at the heels of a hunt.

SIR HARCOURT. Does your Ladyship hunt?

LADY GAY. Ha! I say, governor, does my Ladyship

hunt? I rather flatter myself that I do hunt! Why, Sir Harcourt, one might as well live without laughing as without hunting, it's indigenous to humanity. Man was formed expressly to fit a horse. Are not the hedges and ditches created for leaps? Of course. And I look upon foxes to be the most blessed dispensation of a benign Providence.

SIR HARCOURT. Yes, it is all very well in the abstract: I tried it once.

LADY GAY. Once! Only once?

SIR HARCOURT. Once, only once. And then the animal ran away with me. [All laugh.

LADY GAY. Why you would not have him walk.

SIR HARCOURT. Finding my society disagreeable, he instituted a series of kicks, with a view to removing the annoyance; but aided by the united stays of the mane and tail, I frustrated his intentions. His next resource, however, was more effectual, for he succeeded in rubbing me off against a tree.

MAX and DAZZLE. Ha! ha! ha!

DAZZLE. How absurd you must have looked with your legs and arms in the air, like a ship-wrecked tea-table.

SIR HARCOURT. I never looked absurd in my life. Ah, it may be very amusing in relation, I dare say, but very unpleasant in effect.

LADY GAY. I pity you, Sir Harcourt: it was criminal in your parents to neglect your education so shamefully.

SIR HARCOURT. Possibly; but be assured I shall never break my neck awkwardly from a horse, when it might be accomplished with less trouble from a bed-room window.

COURTLY (*aside*). My dad will be caught by this she-Bucephalus tamer.

MAX (*to* SIR HARCOURT). You must leave your town habits in the smoke of London: here we rise with the lark.

SIR HARCOURT. Have n't the remotest conception when that period is.

GRACE. The man that misses sunrise, loses the sweetest part of his existence.

SIR HARCOURT. Oh, pardon me, I have seen sunrise frequently after a ball, or from the window of my travelling carriage, and I always considered it excessively disagreeable.

GRACE. I love to watch the first tear that glistens in the opening eye of morning, the silent song the flowers breathe, the thrilly choir of the woodland minstrels, to

which the modest brook trickles applause;—these, swelling out the sweetest chord of sweet creation's matins, seem to pour some soft and merry tale into the daylight's ear, as if the waking world had dreamed a happy thing, and now smiled o'er the telling of it.

SIR HARCOURT. The effect of a rustic education! Who could ever discover music in a damp foggy morning, except those confounded waits, who never play in tune, and a miserable wretch who makes a point of crying coffee under my window just as I am persuading myself to sleep; in fact, I never heard any music worth listening to, except in Italy.

LADY GAY. No? then you never heard a well-trained English pack, full cry.

SIR HARCOURT. Full cry!

LADY GAY. Ay! there is harmony, if you will. Give me the trumpet neigh; the spotted pack just catching scent. What a chorus in their yelp! The view—hallo, blent with a peal of free and fearless mirth! That's our old English music—match it where you can.

SIR HARCOURT (*aside*). I must see about Lady Gay Spanker.

DAZZLE (*aside to SIR HARCOURT*). Ah, would you—

MAX. Ah! Sir Harcourt, had you been here a month ago, you would have witnessed the most glorious run that ever swept over merry England's green cheek—a steeple-chase, Sir, which I intended to win, but my horse broke down the day before. I had a chance, notwithstanding, and but for Gay here, I should have won. How I regretted my absence from it! How did my filly behave herself, Gay?

LADY GAY. Gloriously! Max! gloriously! There were sixteen horses in the field, all mettle to the bone: the start was a picture—away we went in a cloud—pell-mell—helter-skelter—the fools first as usual, using themselves up—we soon passed them—first your Kitty, then my Blueskin, and Craven's colt last. Then came the tug—Kitty skimmed the walls—Blueskin flew o'er the fences—the colt neck and neck, and half a mile to run—at last, the colt balked a leap and went wild. Kitty and I had it all to ourselves—she was three lengths a-head as we breasted the last wall, six feet, if an inch, and a ditch on the other side. Now, for the first time, I gave Blueskin his head—ha! ha!—Away he flew like a thunder-bolt—over went the filly—I over the same spot, leaving Kitty in the ditch—walked the steeple, eight miles in thirty minutes—and scarcely turned a hair.

ALL. Bravo! Bravo!

LADY GAY. Do you hunt?

DAZZLE. Hunt! I belong to a hunting family. I was born on horseback and cradled in a kennel! Ay, and I hope I may die with a whoo-whoop!

LADY GAY. Time then appears as young as love, and plumes as swift a wing. Away we go! The earth flies back to aid our course! Horse, man, hound, earth, heaven!—all—all—one piece of glowing ecstasy! Then I love the world, myself, and every living thing,—a jocund soul cries out for very glee, as it could wish that creation had but one mouth that I might kiss it.

SIR HARCOURT (*aside*). I wish I was the mouth.

MAX. Why, we will regenerate you, baronet.

DAZZLE (*slapping his shoulder*). Aye, we'll regenerate you! (SIR HARCOURT *turns angrily away*).

MAX. But, Gay, where is your husband?—Where is Adolphus?

LADY GAY (*coming down*). Bless me, where is my Dolly?

SIR HARCOURT. You're married, then?

LADY GAY. I have a husband somewhere, though I can't find him just now. (*Calls.*) Dolly, dear! (*Aside to MAX.*) Governor, at home I always whistle when I want him.

Enter SPANKER, GRACE and MAX meet him, and shake hands.

SPANKER. Here I am—did you call me, Gay?

SIR HARCOURT (*eyeing him*). Is that your husband?

LADY GAY (*aside*). Yes, bless his stupid face, that's my Dolly.

MAX. Permit me to introduce you to Sir Harcourt Courtly.

SPANKER. How d'ye do? I—ah—um.

[*Appears frightened.*]

LADY GAY (*gets behind him*). Delighted to have the honour of making the acquaintance of a gentleman so highly celebrated in the world of fashion.

SPANKER. Oh, yes, delighted, I'm sure—quite—very—so delighted—delighted! [Gets quite confused.]

LADY GAY. Where have you been, Dolly?

SPANKER. Oh, ah, I was just outside.

MAX. Why did you not come in?

SPANKER. I'm sure I didn't—I don't exactly know; but I thought—as—perhaps—I can't remember.

DAZZLE. Shall we have the pleasure of your company to dinner?

SPANKER. I always dine—usually—that is, unless Gay remains.

LADY GAY. Stay dinner, of course; we came on purpose to stop three or four days with you.

GRACE. Will you excuse my absence, Gay?

MAX. What! what! Where are you going? What takes you away?

GRACE. We must postpone the dinner till Gay is drest.

MAX. Oh, never mind,—stay where you are.

GRACE. No, I must go.

MAX. I say you shan't! I will be king in my own house.

GRACE. Do, my dear uncle. (*Crosses.*) You shall be king, and I'll be your prime minister,—that is, I will rule, and you shall have the honour of taking the consequences.

[*Exit.*

LADY GAY. Well said, Grace; have your own way; it is the only thing we women ought to be allowed.

MAX. Come, Gay, dress for dinner.

SIR HARCOURT. Permit me, Lady Gay Spanker.

LADY GAY. With pleasure,—what do you want?

SIR HARCOURT. To escort you.

LADY GAY. Oh, never mind, I can escort myself, thank you, and Dolly too;—come, dear!

[*Exit.*

SIR HARCOURT. Au revoir!

SPANKER. Ah, thank you!

[*Trips after her.*

SIR HARCOURT. What an ill-assorted pair.

MAX. Not a bit! She married him for freedom, and she has it; he married her for protection, and he has it.

SIR HARCOURT. How he ever summoned courage to propose to her, I can't guess.

MAX (*takes his arm*). Bless you, he never did. She proposed to him. She says he would, if he could; but as he could n't, she did for him

[*Exeunt, laughing, through lawn window.*

Enter COOL, with a letter.

COOL. Mr. Charles, I have been watching to find you alone. Sir Harcourt has written to town for you.

COURTLY. The devil he has.

COOL. He expects you down to-morrow evening.

DAZZLE. Oh! he'll be punctual. A thought strikes me!

COURTLY. Pooh! Confound your thoughts! I can

think of nothing but the idea of leaving Grace, at the very moment when I had established the most —

DAZZLE. What, if I can prevent her marriage with your governor?

COURTLY. Impossible!

DAZZLE. He's pluming himself for the conquest of Lady Gay Spanker. It will not be difficult to make him believe she accedes to his suit. And if she would but join in the plan—

COURTLY. I see it all. And do you think she would?

DAZZLE. I mistake my game if she would not.

COOL. Here comes Sir Harcourt!

DAZZLE. I'll begin with him. Retire, and watch how I'll open the campaign for you.

[COURTLY and COOL retire through window.]

Enter SIR HARCOURT by other window.

SIR HARCOURT. Here is that cursed fellow again.

DAZZLE. Ah, my dear *old* friend!

SIR HARCOURT. Mr. Dazzle.

DAZZLE. I have a secret of importance to disclose to you. Are you a man of honour? Hush! don't speak; you are. It is with the greatest pain I am compelled to request you, as a gentleman, that you will shun studiously the society of Lady Gay Spanker!

SIR HARCOURT. Good gracious! By what right do you make such a demand?

DAZZLE. Why, I am distantly related to the Spankers.

SIR HARCOURT. Why, hang it, sir, if you don't appear to be related to every family in Great Britain?

DAZZLE. A good many of the nobility claim me as a connexion. But, to return—she is much struck with your address; evidently, she laid herself out for display.

SIR HARCOURT. Ha! you surprise me!

DAZZLE. To entangle you.

SIR HARCOURT. Ha! ha! why, it did appear like it.

DAZZLE. You will spare her for my sake; give her no encouragement; if disgrace come upon my relatives, the Spankers, I should never hold up my head again.

SIR HARCOURT (*aside*). I shall achieve an easy conquest, and a glorious. Ha! ha! I never remarked it before; but this is a gentleman.

DAZZLE. May I rely on your generosity?

SIR HARCOURT. Faithfully. (*Shakes his hand.*) Sir, I honour and esteem you; but, might I ask, how you came to meet our friend Max Harkaway, in my house in Belgrave Square.

Re-enter COURTLY from window, he sits on sofa at back.

DAZZLE. Certainly. I had an acceptance of your son's for one hundred pounds.

SIR HARCOURT (*astonished*). Of my son's? Impossible!

DAZZLE. Ah, sir, fact! he paid a debt for a poor, unfortunate man—fifteen children—half-a-dozen wives—the devil knows what all.

SIR HARCOURT. Simple boy!

DAZZLE. Innocent youth, I have no doubt; when you have the hundred convenient, I shall feel delighted.

SIR HARCOURT. Oh! follow me to my room, and if you have the document, it will be happiness to me to pay it. Poor Charles! good heart!

DAZZLE. Oh, a splendid heart! I dare say.

[*Exit* SIR HARCOURT.]

Come here; bring your splendid heart here, and write me the bill.

COURTLY. What for?

DAZZLE. What for? why to release the unfortunate man and his family, to be sure, from jail.

COURTLY. Who is he?

DAZZLE. Yourself.

COURTLY. But I have n't fifteen children!

DAZZLE. Will you take your oath of that?

COURTLY. Nor four wives.

DAZZLE. More shame for you, with all that family. Come, don't be obstinate;—write, and date it back.

COURTLY. Ay, but where is the stamp?

DAZZLE. Here they are, of all patterns. (*Pulls out a pocket-book.*) I keep them ready drawn, in case of necessity, all but the date and acceptance. Now, if you are in an autographic humour, you can try how your signature will look across half a dozen of them;—there—write—exactly—you know the place—across—good—and thank your lucky stars that you have found a friend at last, that gives you money and advice. I'll give the old gentleman this, and then you can relieve the necessities of your fifteen little unfortunates. [*Exit.*]

COURTLY. Things are approaching to a climax; I must appear in *propria persona*—and immediately—but I must first ascertain what are the real sentiments of this riddle of a woman. Does she love me? I flatter myself—and even if she does, ought I to pursue this affair further? My father's rival! As a dutiful son, I should feel concerned for his happiness;—so I am; for I feel assured if

Grace Harkaway becomes his bride, he will for ever be miserable. It is therefore my duty as a loving son, clearly to save my father. Yes, I'll be a sacrifice, and marry her myself. By Jove, here she comes! I shall never have such an opportunity again. (*Retires up.*)

Enter GRACE.

GRACE. I wish I had never seen Mr. Hamilton. Why do I shudder at the contemplation of this marriage, which, till now, was to me a subject of indifference? (*Crosses.*) Am I in love? In love!—if I am, my past life has been the work of raising up a pedestal to place my own folly on. I—the infidel—the railer——

COURTLY (*advancing*). Meditating upon matrimony, madam?

GRACE (*aside*). He little thinks he was the subject of my meditations. (*Aloud.*) No, Mr. Hamilton, I——

COURTLY (*aside*). I must unmask my battery now.

GRACE (*aside*). How foolish I am;—he will perceive that I tremble—I must appear at ease. (*A pause.*)

COURTLY. Eh—ah—um!

GRACE. Ah! (*They sink into silence again—aside.*) How very awkward!

COURTLY (*aside*). It is a very difficult subject to begin. (*Aloud.*) Madam—ahem—there was—is—I mean—I was about to remark—that I was about to observe—a—(*aside*) Hang me, if it is not a very slippery subject! I must brush up my faculties;—attack her in her own way. Sing! oh muse—why, I have made love before to a hundred women.

GRACE (*aside*). I wish I had something to do, for I have nothing to say.

COURTLY. Madam—there is—a subject so fraught with fate to my future life, that you must pardon my lack of delicacy, should a too hasty expression mar the fervent courtesy of its intent. (*Pause.*) To you, I feel aware, I must appear in the light of a comparative stranger.

GRACE (*aside*). I know what's coming.

COURTLY. Of you, I know perhaps too much for my own peace.

GRACE (*aside*). He *is* in love.

COURTLY. I forget all that befel before I saw your beauteous self: I seem born into another world—my nature changed—the beams of that bright face falling on my soul, have, from its chaos, warmed into life the flowrets of affection, whose maiden odours now float towards

the sun, pouring forth on their pure tongue a mite of adoration, midst the voices of a universe. (*Aside.*) That's something in her own style.

GRACE. Mr. Hamilton!

COURTLY. You cannot feel surprised——

GRACE. I am more than surprised. (*Aside.*) I am delighted.

COURTLY. Do not speak so coldly.

GRACE. You have offended me deeply.

COURTLY. No, madam; no woman, whatever her state, can be offended by the adoration even of the meanest; it is myself whom I have offended and deceived—but still I ask your pardon.

GRACE (*aside*). Oh! he thinks I'm refusing him. (*Aloud.*) I am not exactly offended, but——

COURTLY. Consider my position—a few days—and an insurmountable barrier would have placed you beyond my wildest hopes—you would have been my mother.

GRACE. I should have been your mother! (*He starts up annoyed at having betrayed himself.—Aside.*) I thought so.

COURTLY (*aside*). Now I've done it! no—that is, I meant Sir Harcourt Courtly's bride.

GRACE (*with great emphasis*). Never!

COURTLY. How! never! may I then hope—(*she turns away*)—you turn away—you would not lacerate me by a refusal?

GRACE (*aside*). How stupid he is!

COURTLY. Still silent! I thank you, Miss Grace,—I ought to have expected this—fool that I have been—one course alone remains—farewell!

GRACE (*aside*). Why he does n't expect me to make love to him. Now he's going.

COURTLY. Farewell for ever! (*Sits in arm chair.*) Will you not speak one word? I shall leave this house immediately—I shall not see you again.

GRACE. Unhand me, sir, I insist.

COURTLY (*aside*). Oh! what an ass I've been! (*Rushes up to her, and seizes her hand.*) Release this hand? Never! never! (*Kissing it.*) Never will I quit this hand! it shall be my companion in misery—in solitude—when you are far away.

GRACE. Oh! should any one come! (*Drops her handkerchief: he stoops to pick it up.*) For heaven's sake, do not kneel.

COURTLY (*kneels*). For ever thus prostrate, before my soul's saint, I will lead a pious life of eternal adoration!

GRACE. Should we be discovered thus—pray, Mr. Hamilton—pray—pray.

COURTLY. Pray! I am praying; what more can I do?

GRACE. Your conduct is shameful.

COURTLY. It is. (*Rises.*)

GRACE. And if I do not scream, it is not for your sake—that—but it might alarm the family.

COURTLY. It might—it would. Say, am I wholly indifferent to you? I entreat one word—I implore—you do not withdraw your hand—(*she snatches it away—he puts his arm round her waist*)—you smile.

GRACE. Leave me, dear Mr. Hamilton!

COURTLY. Dear! Then I am dear to you; that word once more; say—say you love me!

GRACE. Is this fair? (*He catches her in his arms, and kisses her.*)

Enter LADY GAY SPANKER.

LADY GAY. Ha! oh!

GRACE. Gay! oh!

[*Snatches a kiss from her, and runs off through window.*]

COURTLY. Fizgig! The devil!

LADY GAY. Don't mind me—pray don't let me be any interruption!

COURTLY. I was just——

LADY GAY. Yes, I see you were.

COURTLY. Oh! madam, how could you mar my bliss, in the very ecstasy of its fulfilment.

LADY GAY. I always like to be in at the death. Never drop your ears; bless you, she is only a little fresh—give her her head, and she will outrun herself.

COURTLY. Possibly; but what am I to do?

LADY GAY. Keep your seat.

COURTLY. But in a few days she will take a leap that must throw me—she marries Sir Harcourt Courtly.

LADY GAY. Why, that is awkward, certainly; but you can challenge him, and shoot him.

COURTLY. Unfortunately that is out of the question.

LADY GAY. How so?

COURTLY. You will not betray a secret if I inform you?

LADY GAY. All right; what is it?

COURTLY. I am his son.

LADY GAY. What—his son? But does he not know you?

COURTLY. No; not he. I met him here, by chance, and faced it out, I never saw him before, in my life.

LADY GAY. Beautiful! — I see it all—you're in love with your mother that should be—your wife, that will be.

COURTLY. Now, I think I could distance the old gentleman, if you will but lend us your assistance.

LADY GAY. I will, in any thing.

COURTLY. You must know, then, that my father, Sir Harcourt, has fallen desperately in love with you.

LADY GAY. With me!—(*Utters a scream of delight*)—this is delicious!

COURTLY. Now, if you only could——

LADY GAY. Could!—I will. Ha! ha! I see my cue. I'll cross his scent—I'll draw him after me. Ho! ho! won't I make love to him? Ha!

COURTLY. The only objection might be Mr. Spanker, who might——

LADY GAY. No, he might n't—he's no objection. Bless him, he's an inestimable little character—you don't know him as well as I do, I dare say—ha! ha! (*Dinner bell rings.*) Here they come to dinner. I'll commence my operations on your governor immediately. Ha! ha! how I shall enjoy it!

COURTLY. Be guarded!

Enter MAX HARKAWAY, SIR HARCOURT, DAZZLE, GRACE, and SPANKER.

MAX. Now, gentlemen—Sir Harcourt, do you lead Grace.

LADY GAY. I believe Sir Harcourt is engaged to me—
[*Takes his arm.*]

MAX. Well, please yourselves.

[*They file out at door, MAX first, COURTLY and GRACE, SIR HARCOURT coquetting with LADY GAY, leaving DAZZLE, who offers his arm to SPANKER, and walks on—SPANKER runs after him, trying to take it.*]

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE. — *A handsome Drawing-room in Oak Hall, folding door, chandelier, tables with books, drawings, &c.*

GRACE and LADY GAY discovered drinking coffee.

GRACE (*on ottoman*). If there be one habit more abominable than another, it is that of the gentlemen sitting over their wine; it is a selfish unfeeling fashion, and a gross insult to our sex.

LADY GAY. We are turned out just when the fun begins. How happy the poor wretches look at the contemplation of being rid of us.

GRACE. The conventional signal for the ladies to withdraw, is anxiously and deliberately waited for.

LADY GAY. Then I begin to wish I were a man.

GRACE. The instant the door is closed upon us, there rises a roar!

LADY GAY. In celebration of their short-lived liberty, my love; rejoicing over their emancipation.

GRACE. I think it very insulting, whatever it may be.

LADY GAY. Ah! my dear, philosophers say that man is the creature of an hour—it is the dinner hour, I suppose

DAZZLE (*without*). A song, a song. (*Voice, as if in approval of a proposition, knocking on table, &c., "Bravo!" at back.*)

Enter Servant with salver to take coffee cups from
LADY GAY and GRACE.

GRACE. I am afraid they are getting too pleasant to be agreeable.

LADY GAY. I hope the squire will restrict himself; after his third bottle he becomes rather voluminous. (DAZZLE and MAX call out "Silence!") Some one is going to sing. (*Jumps up.*) Let us hear. (SPANKER is heard to sing "A southerly wind and a cloudy sky" — *after verse chorus.*)

GRACE. Oh no, Gay, for heaven's sake!

LADY GAY. Oho! ha! ha! why that is my Dolly. (*At the conclusion of the verse.*) Well, I never heard my Dolly sing before! Happy wretches, how I envy them!

Enter JAMES, with a note.

JAMES. Mr. Hamilton has just left the house for London.

GRACE. Impossible! that is—without seeing—that is—

LADY GAY. Ha! ha!

GRACE. He never—speak, sir!

JAMES. He left, Miss Grace, in a desperate hurry, and this note, I believe, for you. (*Presenting a note on a salver.*)

GRACE. For me! (*She is about to snatch it, but restraining herself, takes it coolly.*) [Exit JAMES.]

GRACE (*reads*). Excuse me, Gay!

LADY GAY. Certainly.

GRACE. "Your manner during dinner, has left me no alternative but instant departure; my absence will release you from the oppression which my society must necessarily inflict on your sensitive mind. It may tend also to smother, though it can never extinguish that indomitable passion of which I am the passive victim. Dare I supplicate pardon and oblivion for the past? it is the last request of the self-deceived, but still loving—Augustus Hamilton." (*She puts her hand to her forehead, and appears giddy.*)

LADY GAY. Hallo, Grace! pull up—what's the matter?

GRACE (*recovering herself*). Nothing—the heat of the room—so very warm.

LADY GAY. Oh! what excuse does he make? particular unforeseen business, I suppose?

GRACE. Why, yes, a mere formula—a—a—you may put it in the fire. (*She puts it in her bosom.*)

LADY GAY (*aside*). It is near enough to the fire where it is.

GRACE. I am glad he's gone.

LADY GAY. So am I.

GRACE. He was a disagreeable, ignorant person.

LADY GAY. Yes; and so vulgar.

GRACE. No; he was not at all vulgar.

LADY GAY. I mean in appearance.

GRACE. Oh! how can you say so; he was excessively *distingué*!

LADY GAY. Well, I might have been mistaken, but I took him for a forward, intrusive—

GRACE. Good gracious, Gay! he was very retiring—even shy.

LADY GAY (*aside*). It's all right. She is in love,—blows hot and cold in the same breath.

GRACE. How can you be a competent judge. Why, you have not known him more than a few hours,—while I—I——

LADY GAY. Have known him two days and a quarter. I yield—I confess, I never was, or will be, so intimate with him as you appeared to be! Ha! ha!

[*Loud noise of argument—the folding doors are thrown open.*]

Enter the whole party of Gentlemen, apparently engaged in warm discussion; they assemble in knots, while the Servants hand coffee, &c.; MAX, SIR HARCOURT, DAZZLE, and MR. SPANKER together.

DAZZLE. But, my dear sir, consider the state of the two countries, under such a constitution.

SIR HARCOURT. The two countries! What have they to do with the subject?

MAX. Everything; look at their two legislative bodies.

SPANKER. Ay, look at their two legislative bodies.

SIR HARCOURT. Why, it would inevitably establish universal anarchy and confusion.

GRACE. I think they are pretty well established already.

SPANKER. Well, suppose it did, what has anarchy and confusion to do with the subject?

LADY GAY. Do look at my Dolly, he is arguing—talking politics—'pon my life he is. (*Calling.*) Mr. Spanker, my dear!

SPANKER. Excuse me, love, I am discussing a point of importance.

LADY GAY. Oh, that is delicious; he must discuss that to me. (*She goes up and leads him down, he appears to have shaken off his gaucherie, she shakes her head.*) Dolly! Dolly!

SPANKER. Pardon me, Lady Gay Spanker, I conceive your mutilation of my sponsorial appellation highly derogatory to my *amour propre*.

LADY GAY. Your what? Ho, ho!

SPANKER. And I particularly request that, for the future, I may not be treated with that cavalier spirit which does not become your sex, nor your station, your ladyship.

LADY GAY. You have been indulging till you have lost the little wit nature dribbled into your unfortunate little head—your brains want the whipper-in—you are not yourself.

SPANKER. Madam, I am doubly myself; and permit me to inform you, that unless you voluntarily pay obedience to my commands, I shall enforce them.

LADY GAY. Your commands!

SPANKER. Yes, madam; I mean to put a full stop to your hunting.

LADY GAY. You do! ah! (*Aside.*) I can scarcely speak from delight. (*Aloud.*) Who put such an idea into your head, for I'm sure it is not an original emanation of your genius.

SPANKER. Sir Harcourt Courtly, my friend. And now, mark me! I request, for your own sake, that I may not be compelled to assert my a——my authority, as your husband. I shall say no more than this—if you persist in this absurd rebellion——

LADY GAY. Well?

SPANKER. Contemplate a separation.—(*He looks at her haughtily, and retires.*)

LADY GAY. Now I'm happy. My own little darling inestimable Dolly, has tumbled into a spirit, somehow. Sir Harcourt, too! ha! ha! he's trying to make him ill-treat me, so that his own suit may thrive.

SIR HARCOURT (*advances*). Lady Gay.

LADY GAY (*aside*). Now for it. (*They sit on ottoman.*)

SIR HARCOURT. What hours of misery were those I passed when, by your secession, the room suffered a total eclipse.

LADY GAY. Ah! you flatter.

SIR HARCOURT. No, pardon me, that were impossible. No, believe me, I tried to join in the boisterous mirth, but my thoughts would desert to the drawing-room. Ah! how I envied the careless levity and cool indifference with which Mr. Spanker enjoyed your absence.

DAZZLE (*who is lounging in a chair*). Max, that Madeira is worth its weight in gold; I hope you have more of it.

MAX (*talking with GRACE and SPANKER*). A pipe, I think.

DAZZLE. I consider a magnum of that nectar, and a meerschaum of Kanaster, to consummate the ultimatum of all mundane bliss. To drown myself in liquid ecstasy, and then blow a cloud on which the enfranchised soul could soar above Olympus. Oh!

Enter JAMES.

JAMES. Mr. Charles Courtly!

[*Exit.*]

SIR HARCOURT. Ah, now Max, you must see a living apology for my conduct.

Enter YOUNG COURTLY, dressed very plainly.

Well, Charles, how are you? Don't be afraid. There, Max, what do you say now?

MAX. Well, this is the most extraordinary likeness.

GRACE (*aside*). Yes—considering it is the original—I am not so easily deceived!

MAX (*crosses, and shaking hands*). Sir, I am delighted to see you.

COURTLY. Thank you, sir.

DAZZLE. Will you be kind enough to introduce me, Sir Harcourt.

SIR HARCOURT. This is Mr. Dazzle, Charles.

COURTLY. Which? (*Looking from SPANKER to DAZZLE, who crosses, and nearly tumbles over SPANKER, who goes up; COURTLY winks at DAZZLE.*)

SIR HARCOURT (*to LADY GAY*). Is not that refreshing? Miss Harkaway—Charles, this is your mother, or rather will be.

COURTLY. Madam, I shall love, honour, and obey you punctually. (*He takes out a book, sighs, and goes up reading.*)

Enter JAMES.

SIR HARCOURT. You perceive. Quite unused to society—perfectly ignorant of every conventional rule of life.

JAMES. The Doctor and the young ladies have arrived.

MAX. The young ladies—now we must go to the hall—I make it a rule always to commence the festivities with a good old country dance—a rattling Sir Roger de Coverly; come, Sir Harcourt.

SIR HARCOURT. Does this antiquity require a war-whoop in it?

MAX. Nothing, but a nimble foot and a light heart.

SIR HARCOURT. Very antediluvian indispensables. Lady Gay Spanker, will you honour me by becoming my preceptor?

LADY GAY. Why, I am engaged—but (*aloud*) on such a plea as Sir Harcourt's, I must wave all obstacles.

[*Gives her hand.*]

MAX. Now, Grace, girl—give your hand to Mr. Courtly.

GRACE (*sitting*). Pray, excuse me, uncle—I have a headache.

SIR HARCOURT (*aside, leading LADY GAY*). Jealousy! by the gods.—Jealous of my devotions at another's fame. (*Aloud.*) Charles, my boy! amuse Miss Grace during our absence. [*Exit, with LADY GAY.*]

MAX. But, don't you dance, Mr. Courtly?

COURTLY. Dance, sir!—I never dance—I can procure exercise in a much more rational manner, and music disturbs my meditations.

MAX. Well, do the gallant.

[*Exeunt with SPANKER and DAZZLE.*]

COURTLY. I never studied that art—but I have a Prize Essay on a hydrostatic subject, which would delight her—for it enchanted the Reverend Doctor Pump, of Corpus Christi.

GRACE (*aside*). What on earth could have induced him to disfigure himself in that frightful way.—I rather suspect some plot to entrap me into a confession.

COURTLY (*aside*). Dare I confess this trick to her? No! Not until I have proved her affection indisputably.—Let me see—I must concoct. (*He goes to her—looking over his book.*) Madam, I have been desired to amuse you.

GRACE. Thank you.

COURTLY. "The labour we delight in, physics pain."—I will draw you a moral, ahem! Subject—the effects of inebriety!—which, according to Ben Jonson—means perplexion of the intellects, caused by imbibing spirituous liquors.—About an hour before my arrival, I passed an appalling evidence of the effects of this state—a carriage was overthrown—horses killed—gentleman in a hopeless state, with his neck broken—all occasioned by the intoxication of the post-boy.

GRACE. That is very amusing.

COURTLY. I found it edifying—nutritious food for reflection—the expiring man desired his best compliments to you.

GRACE. To me!

[*She rises.*]

COURTLY. Yes.

GRACE. His name was—

COURTLY. Mr. Augustus Hamilton.

GRACE. Augustus—oh!

[*Affects to faint—sinking on the ottoman.*]

COURTLY (*aside*). Huzza!—she loves me.

GRACE. But where, sir, did this happen?

COURTLY. About four miles down the road.

GRACE. He must be conveyed here.

Enter JAMES.

JAMES. Mr. Meddle, madam.

Enter MEDDLE.

MEDDLE. On very particular business.

GRACE. The very person. My dear sir!

MEDDLE. My dear madam!

GRACE. You must execute a very particular commission for me immediately. Mr. Hamilton has met with a frightful accident on the London-road, and is in a dying state.

MEDDLE. Well! I have no hesitation in saying he takes it uncommonly easy—he looks as if he was used to it.

GRACE. You mistake; that is not Mr. Hamilton, but Mr. Courtly, who will explain everything, and conduct you to the spot.

COURTLY (*aside*). Oh! I must put a stop to all this, or I shall be found out. (*Aloud.*) Madam, that were useless; for I omitted to mention a small fact which occurred before I left Mr. Hamilton—he died.

GRACE. Dear me! Oh! then we need n't trouble you Mr. Meddle. (*Waltz music heard without.*) Hark! I hear they are commencing a waltz—if you will ask me—a turn or two in the dance may tend to dispel the dreadful sensation you have aroused.

COURTLY (*aside*). If I can understand her, hang me!—hears of my death—screams out—and then asks me to waltz—I am bewildered—can she suspect me? I wonder which she likes best, me or my double—confound this disguise—I must retain it—I have gone too far with my dad to pull up now. At your service, madam. (*He crosses behind, and offers his hand.*)

GRACE (*aside*). I will pay him well for this trick!—Ah! poor Augustus Hamilton!

COURTLY. Ah, madam! [*Exeunt.*]

MEDDLE. Well, if that is not Mr. Hamilton, scratch me out with a big blade—for I am a blot—a mistake upon the rolls. There is an error in the pleadings somewhere, and I will discover it. I would swear to his identity before the most discriminating jury. By-the-bye, this accident will form a capital excuse for my presence here. I just stepped in to see how matters worked, and—stay, here comes the bridegroom elect—and, oh! in his very arms, Lady Gay Spanker! (*Looks round.*) Where are

my witnesses? Oh! that some one else were here. However, I can retire and get some information, eh—Spanker versus Courtly—damages witness.

[Gets into an arm-chair which he turns round, the back to the audience.]

Enter SIR HARCOURT, supporting LADY GAY.

SIR HARCOURT. This cool room will recover you.

LADY GAY. Excuse my trusting to you for support.

SIR HARCOURT. I am transported—allow me thus ever to support this lovely burden, and I shall conceive that Paradise is regained. *(They sit.)*

LADY GAY. Oh! Sir Harcourt, I feel very faint.

SIR HARCOURT. The waltz made you giddy.

LADY GAY. And I have left my salts in the other room.

SIR HARCOURT. I always carry a flacon for the express accommodation of the fair sex. *(Producing a smelling bottle and sits.)*

LADY GAY. Thank you—ah! *(She sighs.)*

SIR HARCOURT. What a sigh was there!

LADY GAY. The vapour of consuming grief.

SIR HARCOURT. Grief! Is it possible, have *you* a grief? Are *you* unhappy?—dear me!

LADY GAY. Am I not married?

SIR HARCOURT. What a horrible state of existence!

LADY GAY. I am never contradicted, so there are none of those enlivening interested little differences, which so pleasingly diversify the monotony of conjugal life, like spots of verdure—no quarrels, like oases in the desert of matrimony—no rows.

SIR HARCOURT. How vulgar! what a brute!

LADY GAY. I never have anything but my own way; and he won't permit me to spend more than I like.

SIR HARCOURT. Mean-spirited wretch!

LADY GAY. How can I help being miserable?

SIR HARCOURT. Miserable! I wonder you are not in a lunatic asylum, with such unheard-of barbarism!

LADY GAY. But worse than all that!

SIR HARCOURT. Can it be out-heroded?

LADY GAY. Yes, I could forgive that; I do—it is my duty. But only imagine—picture to yourself, my dear Sir Harcourt, though I, the third daughter of an earl, married him out of pity for his destitute and helpless situation as a bachelor, with ten thousand a year—conceive if you can—he actually permits me, with the most placid indifference, to flirt with any old fool I may meet.

SIR HARCOURT. Good gracious!—miserable idiot!

LADY GAY. I fear there is an incompatibility of temper which renders a separation inevitable.

SIR HARCOURT. Indispensable, my dear madam. Ah! had I been the happy possessor of such a realm of bliss, what a beatific eternity unfolds itself to my extending imagination. Had another man but looked at you, I should have annihilated him at once; and if he had the temerity to speak, his life alone could have expiated his crime.

LADY GAY. Oh, an existence of such a nature is too bright for the eye of thought—too sweet to bear reflection!

SIR HARCOURT. My devotion, eternal, deep——

LADY GAY. Oh, Sir Harcourt!

SIR HARCOURT (*more fervently*). Your every thought should be a separate study,—each visit forestalled by the quick apprehension of a kindred soul.

LADY GAY. Alas! how can I avoid my fate?

SIR HARCOURT. If a life—a heart—were offered to your astonished view, by one who is considered the index of fashion, the vane of the *beau-monde*; if you saw him at your feet, begging, beseeching your acceptance of all, and more than this, what would your answer——

LADY GAY. Ah! I know of none so devoted.

SIR HARCOURT. You do. (*Throwing himself upon his knees.*) Behold Sir Harcourt Courtly!

[MEDDLE jumps up in the chair, and writes in his memorandum-book.

LADY GAY (*aside*). Ha, ha! Yoicks, pug has broken cover. (MEDDLE sits again.)

SIR HARCOURT. Speak, adored, dearest Lady Gay!—speak—will you fly from the tyranny, the wretched misery of such a monster's roof, and accept the soul which lives but in your presence.

LADY GAY. Do not press me. Oh spare a weak, yielding woman! be contented to know that you are—alas!—too dear to me. But the world—the world would say——

SIR HARCOURT. Let us be a precedent, to open a more extended and liberal view of matrimonial advantages to society.

LADY GAY. How irresistible is this argument! Oh, pause! (*They place their chairs back.*)

SIR HARCOURT. I have ascertained for a fact, every tradesman of mine lives with his wife, and thus you see it has become a vulgar and plebeian custom.

LADY GAY. Leave me; I feel I cannot withstand your powers of persuasion. Swear that you will never forsake me.

SIR HARCOURT. Dictate the oath. May I grow wrinkled,—may two inches be added to the circumference of my waist,—may I lose the fall in my back,—may I be old and ugly the instant I forego one tithe of adoration!

LADY GAY. I must believe you.

SIR HARCOURT. Shall we leave this detestable spot—this horrible vicinity?

LADY GAY. The sooner the better; to-morrow evening let it be. Now let me return; my absence will be remarked. (*He kisses her hand.*) Do I appear confused? Has my agitation rendered me unfit to enter the room?

SIR HARCOURT. More angelic by a lovely tinge of heightened colour.

LADY GAY. To-morrow, in this room, which opens on the lawn.

SIR HARCOURT. At eleven o'clock.

LADY GAY. The rest of the family will be at supper; I'll plead indisposition, have your carriage in waiting, and four horses. Remember please, be particular to have four; don't let the affair come off shabbily. Adieu, dear Sir Harcourt. [*Exit.*]

SIR HARCOURT (*marches pompously across the stage*). Veni, vidi, vici! Hannibal, Cæsar, Napoleon, Alexander! never completed so fair a conquest in so short a time. She dropped fascinated. This is an unprecedented example of the irresistible force of personal appearance combined with polished address. Poor creature! how she loves me! I pity so prostrating a passion, and ought to return it. I will; it is a duty I owe to society and fashion. [*Exit.*]

MEDDLE (*turns the chair round*). "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood leads on to fortune." This is my tide—I am the only witness. "Virtue is sure to find its own reward." But I've no time to contemplate what it shall be—something huge. Let me see—Spanker *versus* Courtly—Crim. Con.—Damages placed at £150,000 at least, for juries always decimate your hopes.

Enter MR. SPANKER.

SPANKER. I cannot find Gay anywhere.

MEDDLE. The plaintiff himself—I must commence the action. Mr. Spanker, as I have information of deep vital

importance to impart, will you take a seat? (*They sit solemnly—takes out note-book and pencil.*) Ahem! you have a wife!

Enter LADY GAY—she crosses behind and listens.

SPANKER. Yes, I believe I——

MEDDLE. Will you be kind enough, without any prevarication, to answer my questions?—You have a wife?

SPANKER. You alarm—I——

MEDDLE. Compose yourself, and reserve your feelings: take time to consider. You have a wife?

SPANKER. Yes——

MEDDLE. He has a wife—good—(*writes*) a bona fide wife—bound morally and legally to be your wife, and nobody else's in effect, except on your written permission——

SPANKER. But what has this——

MEDDLE. Hush! allow me, my dear sir, to congratulate you. (*Shakes his hand.*)

SPANKER. What for?

MEDDLE. Lady Gay Spanker is about to dishonour the bond of wedlock, by eloping from you.

SPANKER (*starting*). What!

MEDDLE (*pushing him down again*). I thought you would be overjoyed. Will you place the affair in my hands, and I will venture to promise the largest damages on record.

SPANKER (*starts up*). D—n the damages! I want my wife. Oh, I'll go and ask her not to run away. She may run away with me—she may hunt—she may ride—anything she likes. Oh, sir, let us put a stop to this affair.

MEDDLE (*who has put the chairs back*). Put a stop to it! do not alarm me, sir. Sir, you will spoil the most exquisite brief that was ever penned. It must proceed—it shall proceed. It is illegal to prevent it, and I will bring an action against you for wilful intent to injure the profession.

SPANKER. Oh, what an ass I am! Oh, I have driven her to this. It was all that cursed brandy-punch on the top of Burgundy. What a fool I was!

MEDDLE. It was the happiest moment of your life.

SPANKER. So I thought at the time; but we live to grow wiser. Tell me, who is the vile seducer?

MEDDLE. Sir Harcourt Courtly.

SPANKER. Ha! he is my best friend.

MEDDLE. I should think he is. If you will accompany me—here is a verbatim copy of the whole transaction in short-hand—sworn to by me.

SPANKER. Only let me have Gay back again.

MEDDLE. Even that may be arranged.—This way.

SPANKER. That ever I should live to see my wife run away. Oh! I will do anything—keep two packs of hounds—buy up every horse and ass in England—myself included—oh! *[Exit with MEDDLE.]*

LADY GAY. Ha, ha, ha! Poor Dolly, I'm sorry I must continue to deceive him. If he would but kindle up a little.—So that fellow overheard all—well, so much the better.

Enter COURTLY.

COURTLY. My dear madam, how fares the plot; does my governor nibble?

LADY GAY. Nibble! he is caught, and in the basket I have just left him with the hook in his gills, panting for very lack of element. But how goes on your encounter?

COURTLY. Bravely; by a simple ruse I have discovered that she loves me. I see but one chance against the best termination I could hope.

LADY GAY. What is it?

COURTLY. My father has told me that I return to town again to-morrow afternoon.

LADY GAY. Well, I insist you stop and dine—keep out of the way.

COURTLY. Oh, but what excuse can I offer for disobedience? What can I say when he sees me before dinner?

LADY GAY. Say—say Grace.

Enter GRACE, who gets behind the window curtains.

COURTLY. Ha, ha!

LADY GAY. I have arranged to elope with Sir Harcourt myself to-morrow night.

COURTLY. The deuce you have!

LADY GAY. Now if you could persuade Grace to follow that example—his carriage will be in waiting at the Park—be there a little before eleven—and it will just prevent our escape. Can you make her agree to that?

COURTLY. Oh, without the slightest difficulty, if Mr. Augustus Hamilton supplicates.

LADY GAY. Success attend you. [Going.

COURTLY. I will bend the haughty Grace. [Going.

LADY GAY. Do. [Exeunt severally.

GRACE (*at back*). Will you? [Act drop quickly.

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE.—*Same as Act IV.*

Enter COOL.

COOL. This is the most serious affair Sir Harcourt has ever been engaged in. I took the liberty of considering him a fool, when he told me he was going to marry; but voluntarily to incur another man's incumbrance is very little short of madness. If he continues to conduct himself in this absurd manner, I shall be compelled to dismiss him.

Enter SIR HARCOURT, equipped for travelling.

SIR HARCOURT. Cool!

COOL. Sir Harcourt.

SIR HARCOURT. Is my chariot in waiting?

COOL. For the last half-hour at the park wicket. But, pardon the insinuation, sir—would it not be more advisable to hesitate a little for a short reflection before you undertake the heavy responsibility of a woman?

SIR HARCOURT. No—hesitation destroys the romance of *faux pas*, and reduces it to the level of a mere mercantile calculation.

COOL. What is to be done with Mr. Charles?

SIR HARCOURT. Ay, much against my will, Lady Gay prevailed on me to permit him to remain. You, Cool, must return him to college. Pass through London, and deliver these papers; here is a small notice of the coming elopement for the *Morning Post*; this, by an eye-witness, for the *Herald*; this, with all the particulars, for the *Chronicle*; and the full and circumstantial account for the evening journals—after which, meet us at Boulogne.

COOL. Very good, Sir Harcourt. *[Going.*

SIR HARCOURT. Lose no time. Remember—Hotel Anglais, Boulogne-sur-Mer. And, Cool, bring a few copies with you, and don't forget to distribute some amongst my very particular friends.

COOL. It shall be done. *[Exit COOL.*

SIR HARCOURT. With what indifference does a man of the world view the approach of the most perilous catastrophe! How many roses will fade upon the cheek of beauty, when the defalcation of Sir Harcourt Courtly is whispered—then hinted—at last confirmed and bruited. I think I see them. Then, on my return, they will not dare to eject me—I am their sovereign! Whoever attempts to think of treason, I'll banish him from the West End—I'll cut him—I'll put him out of fashion!

Enter LADY GAY.

LADY GAY. Sir Harcourt!

SIR HARCOURT. At your feet.

LADY GAY. I had hoped you would have repented.

SIR HARCOURT. Repented!

LADY GAY. Have you not come to say it was a jest?—say you have!

SIR HARCOURT. Love is too sacred a subject to be trifled with. Come, let us fly!—See, I have procured disguises.

LADY GAY. My courage begins to fail me. Let me return.

SIR HARCOURT. Impossible!

LADY GAY. Where do you intend to take me?

SIR HARCOURT. You shall be my guide. The carriage waits.

LADY GAY. You will never desert me?

SIR HARCOURT. Desert! Oh, heavens! Nay, do not hesitate—flight, now, alone is left to your desperate situation! Come, every moment is laden with danger.

[They are going.

LADY GAY. Oh! gracious!

SIR HARCOURT. Hush! What is it?

LADY GAY. I have forgotten—I must return.

SIR HARCOURT. Impossible!

LADY GAY. I must! I must! I have left Max—a pet staghound, in his basket—without whom, life would be unendurable—I could not exist!

SIR HARCOURT. No, no. Let him be sent after us in a hamper.

LADY GAY. In a hamper! remorseless man! Go—you

love me not. How would you like to be sent after me—in a hamper? Let me fetch him. Hark! I hear him squeal! Oh! Max—Max!

SIR HARCOURT. Hush! for heaven's sake. They'll imagine you're calling the Squire. I hear footsteps; where can I retire?

[*He pulls the blind up, and goes off at the window.*]

Enter MEDDLE, SPANKER, DAZZLE, and MAX—LADY GAY screams.

MEDDLE. Spanker versus Courtly!—I subpoena every one of you, as witnesses!—I have 'em ready—here they are—a shilling apiece, (*giving them round*).

LADY GAY. Where is Sir Harcourt?

MEDDLE. There!—bear witness!—calling on the vile delinquent for protection!

SPANKER. Oh! his protection!

LADY GAY. What? ha!

MEDDLE. I'll swear I overheard the whole elopement planned—before any jury!—where's the book!

SPANKER (*to* LADY GAY). Do you hear, you profligate!

LADY GAY. Ha! ha! ha! ha!

DAZZLE. But where is this wretched Lothario?

MEDDLE. Ay, where is the defendant?

SPANKER. Where lies the hoary villain?

LADY GAY. What villain?

SPANKER. That will not serve you!—I'll not be blinded that way!

MEDDLE. We won't be blinded any way!

MAX. I must seek Sir Harcourt, and demand an explanation!—Such a thing never occurred in Oak Hall before!—It must be cleared up! [*Exit* MAX.]

MEDDLE (*aside to* SPANKER). Now, take my advice, remember your gender. Mind the notes I have given you!

SPANKER (*aside*). All right! Here they are! Now, madam, I have procured the highest legal opinion on the point.

MEDDLE. Hear! hear!

SPANKER. And the question resolves itself into a—into—what's this? (*Looks at notes.*)

MEDDLE. A nutshell!

SPANKER. Yes, we are in a nutshell. Will you, in every respect, subscribe to my requests—desires—commands—(*looks at notes*)—orders—imperative—indicative—injunctive—or otherwise.

LADY GAY. 'Pon my life he's actually going to assume

the ribbons, and take the box-seat. I must put a stop to this. I will! Mr. Spanker, I've been insulted by Sir Harcourt Courtly, he tried to elope with me; I place myself under your protection—challenge him.

DAZZLE. Oh! I smell powder!

LADY GAY. I know it will all end in smoke. Sir Harcourt would rather run than fight.

DAZZLE. Command my services. My dear madam, can I be of any use?

SPANKER. Oh! challenge!—I must consult my legal adviser!

MEDDLE. No; impossible! (*Crosses.*)

DAZZLE. Pooh!—the easiest thing in life!—leave it to me—what has an attorney to do with affairs of honour?—they are out of his element!

MEDDLE. Compromise the question!—pull his nose!—we have no objection to that!

DAZZLE (*turning to LADY GAY*). Well,—we have no objection either—have we?

LADY GAY. No!—pull his nose—that will be something.

DAZZLE. Yes, pull his nose.

SPANKER. Yes, but who's to do it?

MEDDLE. And, moreover, it is not exactly actionable!

DAZZLE. Is n't it!—thank you—I'll note down that piece of information—it may be useful.

MEDDLE. How! cheated out of my legal knowledge. (*Crosses to DAZZLE who signifies he will pull his nose—he hastily gets back.*)

LADY GAY (*crosses*). Mr. Spanker, I am determined!—I insist upon a challenge being sent to Sir Harcourt Courtly!—and—mark me—if you refuse to fight him,—I will.

MEDDLE. Don't. Take my advice—you'll incapacit—

LADY GAY. Look you, Mr. Meddle, (*crosses*) unless you wish me to horsewhip you, hold your tongue.

MEDDLE. What a she-tiger—I shall retire and collect my costs. [*Exit MEDDLE.*]

LADY GAY. Mr. Spanker, oblige me by writing as I dictate.

SPANKER. Don't go! He's gone—and now I am defenceless! Is this the fate of husbands?—A duel—Is this the result of becoming master of my own family?

LADY GAY. Come, Dolly!

SPANKER. I won't be dollied! (*sits, DAZZLE wheels him round to table, and sits on arm of the chair.*)

LADY GAY. "Sir, the situation in which you were

discovered with my wife, admit neither of explanation nor apology."

SPANKER. Oh yes! but it does—I don't believe you really intended to run quite away.

LADY GAY. You do not; but I know better, I say I did; and if it had not been for your unfortunate interruption, I do not know where I might have been by this time. Go on.

SPANKER. "Nor apology."—I'm writing my own death warrant—committing suicide on compulsion.

LADY GAY. "The bearer"—

SPANKER. That will be you.

DAZZLE. I'm the bearer.

LADY GAY. "Will arrange all preliminary matters, for another day must see this sacrilege expiated by your life, or that of"—the bearer?

DAZZLE. No, no.

LADY GAY. "Yours very sincerely" (*looking at DAZZLE*)—Very sincerely?—

[LADY GAY and DAZZLE repeat "very sincerely" which SPANKER repeats in astonishment.]

DAZZLE. "Dolly Spanker."

LADY GAY. Dolly? No, no!

SPANKER. Oh! "Augustus Spanker."

LADY GAY. Now, Mr. Dazzle. (*Gives the letter over SPANKER'S head.*)

DAZZLE. The document is as sacred as if it were a hundred pound bill.

LADY GAY. We trust to your discretion.

SPANKER. His discretion! Oh, put your head in a tiger's mouth, and trust to his discretion.

DAZZLE (*sealing letter, &c. with SPANKER'S seal*). My dear Lady Gay, matters of this kind are indigenous to my nature, independently of their pervading fascination to all humanity; but this is more especially delightful, as you may perceive I shall be the intimate and bosom friend of both parties. (*Seals the letter with SPANKER'S seal, pulling him up.*)

LADY GAY. Is it not the only alternative in such a case?

DAZZLE. It is a beautiful panacea in any, in every case. (*Going—returns.*) By the way, where would you like this party of pleasure to come off? Open air shooting is pleasant enough, but if I might venture to advise, we could order half a dozen of that Madeira and a box of cigars into the billiard-room, so make a night of it, eh! Mr. Spanker?

SPANKER. I don't smoke.

DAZZLE. Take up the irons every now and then, string for first shot, and blaze away at one another in an amicable and gentlemanlike way; so conclude the matter before the potency of the liquor could disturb the individuality of the object, or the smoke of the cigars render its outline dubious. Does such an arrangement coincide with your views?

LADY GAY. Perfectly.

DAZZLE. I trust to be shortly the harbinger of happy tidings. [Exit.]

SPANKER (*crosses*). Lady Gay Spanker, are you ambitious of becoming a widow?

LADY GAY. Why, Dolly, woman is at best but weak, and weeds become me.

SPANKER. Female! am I to be immolated on the altar of your vanity!

LADY GAY. If you become pathetic, I shall laugh.

SPANKER. Shall laugh? you *are* laughing. Farewell—base, heartless, unfeeling woman! [Exit.]

LADY GAY. Ha! well, so I am. I am heartless, for he is a dear good little fellow, and I ought not to play upon his feelings; but 'pon my life he sounds so well up at concert pitch, that I feel disinclined to untune him. Poor Dolly, I did n't think he cared so much about me. I will put him out of pain. [Exit.]

SIR HARCOURT COURTLY *comes down from window*.

SIR HARCOURT. I have been a fool! a dupe of my own vanity. I shall be pointed at as a ridiculous old coxcomb—and so I am; the hour of conviction is *arrived*. Have I deceived myself?—Have I turned all my senses inwards—looking towards self—always self?—and has the world been ever laughing at me? Well, if they have, I will revert the joke;—they may say I am an old ass; but I will prove that I am neither too old to repent my folly, or such an ass as to flinch from confessing it. A blow half met is but half felt.

Enter DAZZLE.

DAZZLE. Sir Harcourt, may I be permitted the honour of a few minutes' conversation with you?

SIR HARCOURT. With pleasure.

DAZZLE. Have the kindness to throw your eye over that. (*Gives the letter.*)

SIR HARCOURT (*reads*:) Situation—my wife—apology—expiate—my life.” Why this is intended for a challenge.

DAZZLE. Why indeed I am perfectly aware that it is not quite *en règle* in the couching, for with that I had nothing to do; but I trust that the irregularity of the composition will be confounded in the beauty of the subject.

SIR HARCOURT. Mr. Dazzle, are you in earnest?

DAZZLE. Sir Harcourt Courtly, upon my honour I am, and I hope that no previous engagement will interfere with an immediate reply in *propria persona*. We have fixed upon the billiard-room as the scene of action, which I have just seen properly illuminated in honour of the occasion; and by the bye, if your implements are not handy, I can oblige you with a pair of the sweetest things you ever handled—hair triggered—saw grip; heir-looms in my family. I regard them almost in the light of relations.

SIR HARCOURT. Sir, I shall avail myself of one of your relatives. One of the hereditaments of my folly—I must accept it. (*Aloud.*) Sir, I shall be happy to meet Mr. Spanker at any time or place he may appoint.

DAZZLE. The sooner the better, sir. Allow me to offer you my arm. I see you understand these matters;—my friend Spanker is wofully ignorant—miserably uneducated. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter MAX, with GRACE.

MAX. Give ye joy, girl, give ye joy. Sir Harcourt Courtly must consent to waive all title to your hand in favour of his son Charles.

GRACE. Oh, indeed! Is that the pith of your congratulation—humph! the exchange of an old fool for a young one; so then my fate is reduced to this, to sacrifice my fortune, or unite myself with a worm-eaten edition of the classics.

MAX. Why, he certainly is not such a fellow as I could have chosen for my little Grace; but consider, to retain fifteen thousand a year. Now, tell me honestly—but why should I say honestly?—speak, girl, would you rather not have the lad?

GRACE. Why do you ask me?

MAX. Why, look ye, I’m an old fellow—another hunting season or two, and I shall be in at my own death: I can’t leave you this house and land, because they are entailed; nor can I say I’m sorry for it, for it

is a good law; but I have a little box with my Grace's name upon it, where since your father's death, and miserly will, I have yearly placed a certain sum to be yours, should you refuse to fulfil the conditions prescribed.

GRACE. My own dear uncle! (*Clasping him round the neck.*)

MAX. Pooh—pooh! what's to do now? Why it was only a trifle—why, you little rogue, what are you crying about?

GRACE. Nothing, but——

MAX. But what? Come, out with it: will you have young Courtly?

Enter LADY GAY.

LADY GAY. Oh! Max, Max!

MAX. Why, what's amiss with you?

LADY GAY. I'm a wicked woman——

MAX. What have you done?

LADY GAY. Everything! Oh, I thought Sir Harcourt was a coward, but now I find a man may be a coxcomb without being a poltroon. Just to shew my husband how inconvenient it is to hold the ribands sometimes, I made him send a challenge to the old fellow, and he, to my surprise, accepted it, and is going to blow my Dolly's brains out in the billiard-room.

MAX. The devil!

LADY GAY. Just when I imagined I had got my whip hand of him again, out comes my linch pin, and over I go—oh!

MAX. I will soon put a stop to that. A duel under my roof!—murder in Oak Hall! I'll shoot them both!

[*Exit.*]

GRACE. Are you really in earnest?

LADY GAY. Do you think it like a joke! Oh, Dolly, if you allow yourself to be shot, I will never forgive you—never! Ah! he is a great fool, Grace; but I can't tell why, but I would sooner lose my bridle hand than he should be hurt on my account.

Enter SIR HARCOURT.

Tell me—tell me, have you shot him—is he dead? my dear Sir Harcourt—you horrid old brute!—have you killed him? I shall never forgive myself! [*Exit.*]

GRACE. Oh! Sir Harcourt, what has happened?

SIR HARCOURT. Don't be alarmed, I beg—your uncle interrupted us—discharged the weapons—locked the challenger up in the billiard-room, to cool his rage.

GRACE. Thank heaven!

SIR HARCOURT. Miss Grace, to apologise for my conduct were useless, more especially as I am confident that no feelings of indignation or sorrow for my late acts are cherished by you; but still reparation is in my power, and I not only waive all title, right, or claim to your person or your fortune, but freely admit your power to bestow them on a more worthy object.

GRACE. This generosity, Sir Harcourt, is most unexpected.

SIR HARCOURT. No, not generosity, but simply justice, justice!

GRACE. May I still beg a favour?

SIR HARCOURT. Claim anything that is mine to grant.

GRACE. You have been duped by Lady Gay Spanker, I have also been cheated and played upon by her, and Mr. Hamilton—may I beg that the contract between us, may to all appearances be still held good?

SIR HARCOURT. Certainly, although I confess I cannot see the point of your purpose.

Enter MAX, with YOUNG COURTLY.

MAX. Now, Grace, I have brought the lad.

GRACE. Thank you, uncle, but the trouble was quite unnecessary—Sir Harcourt holds to his original contract.

MAX. The deuce he does!

GRACE. And I am willing—nay, eager, to become Lady Courtly.

COURTLY (*aside*). The deuce you are!

MAX. But, Sir Harcourt—

SIR HARCOURT. One word, Max, for an instant.

[*They retire off.*]

COURTLY (*aside*). What can this mean? Can it be possible that I have been mistaken that she is not in love with Augustus Hamilton?

GRACE (*aside*). Now we shall find how he intends to bend the haughty Grace.

COURTLY. Madam—are you really in earnest—are you in love with my father?

GRACE. No, indeed I am not.

COURTLY. Are you in love with any one else?

GRACE. No, or I should not marry him.

COURTLY. Then you actually accept him as your husband?

GRACE. In the common acceptation of the word.

COURTLY (*aside*). Hang me if I have not been a pretty

fool! (*Aloud.*) Why do you marry him, if you don't care about him?

GRACE. To save my fortune.

COURTLY (*aside*). Mercenary, cold-hearted girl! were you never in love?

GRACE. Never!

COURTLY (*aside*). Oh! what an ass I've been! (*Aloud.*) I heard Lady Gay mention something about a Mr. Hamilton.

GRACE. Ah, yes, a person who, after the acquaintance-ship of two days, had the assurance to make love to me, and I——

COURTLY. Yes,—you—Well?

GRACE. I pretended to receive his attentions.

COURTLY (*aside*). It was the best pretence I ever saw! (*Aloud.*) Yet you seemed rather concerned about the news of his death?

GRACE (*aside*). What can I say? (*Aloud.*) Ah! but my maid Pert's brother is the post-boy, and I thought he might have sustained an injury, poor boy.

COURTLY (*aside*). Curse the post-boy! (*Aloud.*) Madam, if the retention of your fortune be the plea on which you are about to bestow your hand on one you do not love, and whose very actions speak his carelessness for that inestimable jewel he is incapable of appreciating—Know that I am devotedly, madly, attached to you.

GRACE. You, sir? Impossible!

COURTLY. Not at all,—but inevitable,—I have been so for a long time.

GRACE. Why you never saw me until last night.

COURTLY. I have seen you in imagination—you are the ideal I have worshipped.

GRACE. Since you press me into a confession,—which nothing but this could bring me to speak,—know, I did love poor Augustus Hamilton——

Re-enter MAX and SIR HARCOURT.

But he—he is—no—more! Pray, spare me, sir.

COURTLY. She loves me! (*Aside.*) And, oh! Here's the governor again—what a situation I am in—if I own I am the man, he will overhear, and ruin me—if I do not, she'll marry him—what is to be done?

Enter LADY GAY.

LADY GAY. Where have you put my Dolly? I have been racing all round the house—tell me, is he quite dead?

MAX. I'll have him brought in. [*Exit.*

SIR HARCOURT. My dear madam, you must perceive this unfortunate occurrence was no fault of mine. I was compelled to act as I have done—I was willing to offer any apology, but that resource was excluded, as unacceptable.

LADY GAY. I know—I know—'t was I made him write that letter—there was no apology required—'t was I, that apparently seduced you from the paths of propriety;—'t was all a joke, and here is the end of it.

Enter MAX, SPANKER, and DAZZLE.

Oh! if he had but lived to say, "I forgive you, Gay!"

SPANKER. So I do!

LADY GAY (*seeing SPANKER*). Ah! he is alive!

SPANKER. Of course, I am!

LADY GAY. Ha! ha! ha! (*Embraces him.*) I will never hunt again—unless you wish it. Sell your stable—

SPANKER. No, no—do what you like—say what you like, for the future! I find the head of a family has less ease and more responsibility than I, as a member, could have anticipated. I abdicate!

[*They go up, his arm round her waist, hers on his shoulder.*

Enter COOL.

SIR HARCOURT. Ah! Cool, here! (*Aside.*) You may destroy those papers—I have altered my mind—and I do not intend to elope at present. Where are they?

COOL. As you seemed particular, Sir Harcourt, I sent them off by the mail to London.

SIR HARCOURT. Why, then, a full description of the whole affair will be published to-morrow.

COOL. Most irretrievably!

SIR HARCOURT. You must post to town immediately, and stop the press.

COOL. Beg pardon—but they would see me hanged first, Sir Harcourt; they don't frequently meet with such a profitable lie.

JAMES (*without*). No, sir!—no, sir! (*Enters.*) Sir, there is a gentleman, who is calling himself Mr. Solomon Isaacs, insists upon following me up.

Enter MR. SOLOMON ISAACS.

ISAACS. Mr. Courtly, you will excuse my performance of a most disagreeable duty at any time, but more

especially in such a manner. I must beg the honour of your company to town.

SIR HARCOURT. What!—how!—what for?

ISAACS. For debt, Sir Harcourt.

SIR HARCOURT. Arrested! impossible! Here must be some mistake.

ISAACS. Not the slightest, sir. Judgment has been given in five cases, for the last three months; but Mr. Courtly is an eel, rather too nimble for my men; we have been on his track, and traced him down to this village, with Mr. Dazzle.

DAZZLE. Ah! Isaacs!—how are you?

ISAACS. Thank you, sir. (*Speaks to SIR HARCOURT.*)

MAX. Do you know him?

DAZZLE. Oh! intimately—distantly related to his family—same arms on our escutcheon—empty purse falling through a hole in a—pocket; motto, “Requiescat in pace”—which means “Let virtue be its own reward.”

SIR HARCOURT (*to ISAACS*). Oh! I thought there was a mistake! Know, to your misfortune, that Mr. Hamilton was the person you dogged to Oak Hall, between whom and my son a most remarkable likeness exists.

ISAACS. Ha! ha! Know, to your misfortune, Sir Harcourt, that Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Courtly are one and the same person!

SIR HARCOURT. Charles!

COURTLY. Concealment is in vain.—I am Augustus Hamilton.

SIR HARCOURT. Hang me, if I did n't think it all along! Oh! you infernal, cozening dog!

ISAACS. Now, then, Mr. Courtly—

GRACE. Stay, sir—Mr. Charles Courtly is under age—ask his father.

SIR HARCOURT. Ahem!—I won't—I won't pay a shilling of the rascal's debts—not a sixpence!

GRACE. Then, I will—you may retire. [*Exit ISAACS.*]

COURTLY. I can now perceive the generous point of your conduct towards me; and, believe me, I appreciate and will endeavour to deserve it.

MAX (*crosses*). Ha! ha! Come, Sir Harcourt, you have been fairly beaten—you must forgive him—say you will.

SIR HARCOURT. So, sir, it appears you have been leading, covertly, an infernal town life.

COURTLY. Yes, please, father. (*Imitating MASTER CHARLES.*)

SIR HARCOURT. None of your humbug, sir! (*Aside.*) He is my own son—how could I expect him to keep out of the fire. (*Aloud.*) And you, Mr. Cool—have you been deceiving me?

COOL. Oh! Sir Harcourt, if your perception was played upon, how could I be expected to see?

[*Pause—he goes up, and off.*]

SIR HARCOURT. Well, it would be useless to withhold my hand. There, boy! (*He gives his hand to COURTLY; GRACE comes down, and offers her hand; he takes it.*) What is all this? What do you want?

COURTLY. Your blessing, father.

GRACE. If you please, father.

SIR HARCOURT. Oho! the mystery is being solved. So, so, you young scoundrel, you have been making love—under the rose.

LADY GAY. He learnt that from you, Sir Harcourt.

SIR HARCOURT. Ahem! What would you do now, if I were to withhold my consent?

GRACE. Do without it.

MAX. The will says, if Grace marries any one but you—her property reverts to your heir apparent; and here he stands.

LADY GAY. Make a virtue of necessity.

SPANKER. I married from inclination; and see how happy I am. And if ever I have a son—

LADY GAY. Hush! Dolly, dear.

SIR HARCOURT. Well! take her, boy! Although you are too young to marry. [*They retire with MAX.*]

LADY GAY. Am I forgiven, Sir Harcourt?

SIR HARCOURT. Ahem! Why—a—(*aside*). Have you really deceived me?

LADY GAY. Can you not see through this?

SIR HARCOURT. And you still love me?

LADY GAY. As much as ever I did.

SIR HARCOURT (*is about to kiss her hand, when SPANKER interposes between them*). A very handsome ring, indeed.

SPANKER. Very. (*Puts her arm in his, and go up to DAZZLE.*)

SIR HARCOURT. Poor little Spanker.

MAX (*coming down, aside to SIR HARCOURT*). One point I wish to have settled. Who is Mr. Dazzle?

SIR HARCOURT. A relative of the Spankers, he told me.

MAX. Oh, no,—a near connexion of yours.

SIR HARCOURT. Never saw him before I came here, in all my life. (*To COURTLY.*) Charles! who is Mr. Dazzle?

COURTLY. Who, I don't know. Dazzle, Dazzle (*DAZZLE comes*), will you excuse an impertinent question?

DAZZLE. Certainly.

COURTLY. Who the deuce are you?

DAZZLE. I have not the remotest idea!

ALL. How, sir!

DAZZLE. Simple question as you may think it, it would puzzle half the world to answer. One thing I can vouch—Nature made me a gentleman—that is, I live on the best that can be procured for credit. I never spend my own money when I can oblige a friend. I'm always thick on the winning horse. I'm an epidemic on the trade of tailor. For further particulars inquire of any sitting magistrate.

SIR HARCOURT. And these are the deeds which attest your title to the name of gentleman? I perceive that you have caught the infection of the present age. Charles, permit me, as your father, and you, sir, as his friend, to correct you on one point. Barefaced assurance is the vulgar substitute for gentlemanly ease; and there are many who, by aping the *vices* of the great, imagine that they elevate themselves to the rank of those whose faults alone they copy. No! sir. The title of gentleman is the only one *out* of any monarch's gift, yet within the reach of every peasant. It should be engrossed by *Truth*—stamped with *Honour*—sealed with *good-feeling*—signed *Man*—and enrolled in every true young English heart.

THE END.

JAMES ROBINSON PLANCHÉ, who may be called the *Régent Scribe* of England, if we look to the amazing quantity and variety of his dramatic productions, was born in London on 27th February, 1796. His origin is remotely French—like that of the majority of his plays. When he was one and twenty, he wrote a burlesque called "*Amoroso, King of Little Britain*," which was performed with success at Drury Lane; and thus commenced his long and prosperous career as author of opera, burlesque, extravaganza, and farce, and especially as a skilful adapter of French comedies and vaudevilles.

PLANCHÉ.

Planché is an antiquary, as well as a dramatist, and is an authority on all matters of costume, on which he has written elaborate works. In 1854 he was appointed *Rouge Croix Pursuivant of Arms*.

The peculiar species of drama known in England as an extravaganza may be said to have been his creation; and although he has had several imitators, none have equalled him in the mingling of elegance with burlesque. He has the rare tact of being able to make effective use of the "*slang*" of the day, without degenerating into vulgarity; giving it a comic turn by the elaborate formality of the setting. For example, at a time when all the *gamins* were shouting "*Does your mother know you're out?*" to the passing dandy, or the solemn old gentleman, Planché used the popular phrase somewhat thus:—

Yet prithee stay—relieve this dreadful doubt—

Say, does your anxious mother know you're out?

the effect of which was to set the whole house in a roar.

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DAZZLE. Certainly.

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SIR HANCOCK. And these are the deeds which attest your title to the name of gentleman? I perceive that you have caught the infection of the present age. Charles, permit me, as your father, and you, sir, as his friend, to correct you on one point. **PLAUCHE** is the vulgar substitute for gentleman, and there are many who, by using the name of the great, imagine that they elevate themselves to the rank of those whose faults alone they copy. No! sir. The title of gentleman is the only one out of any monarch's gift, yet within the reach of every peasant. It should be engrossed by Truth—stamped with Honour—sealed with good-feeling—signed with an enrolled in every true young English heart.

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It has been difficult to select one of these extravaganzas which should give an adequate idea of the class, the more so because not only were they all written expressly for particular actors, and particular seasons, but because they were all considered as vehicles for magnificent scenery, and dresses, for dances and music. But "Fortunio" is perhaps as good as any of them, and the reader must be content with it.

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

THE PROCLAMATION.

FORTUNIO,

AND HIS

SEVEN GIFTED SERVANTS:

A FAIRY EXTRAVAGANZA

IN TWO ACTS.

226

FLANCHÉ

It has been difficult to select one of these extravaganzas which should give an adequate idea of the class, the more so because not only were they all written expressly for particular seasons, but because they were all considered as vehicles for magnificent scenery, and dresses, for dances and music. But "Fortunio" is perhaps as good as any of them, and the reader must be content.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THE PROCLAMATION.

BARON DUNOVER, *a nobleman in difficulties.*
Honourable Miss PERTINA, *his eldest daughter.*
Honourable Miss FLIRTINA, *his second daughter.*
Honourable Miss MYRTINA, *his youngest daughter, assuming the name and arms of FORTUNIO.*
Herald.
The Fairy FAVOURABLE, Elfin Queen and lady patroness.
MONS. BUMBLE, *a wood bee colinet, conductor of the band.*
COMRADE, *a learned horse.*

THE SEVEN GIFTED SERVANTS.

STRONGBACK.
LIGHTFOOT.
MARKSMAN.
FINE-EAR.
BOISTERER.
GORMAND.
TIPLER.

THE PRESENTATION.

KING ALFOURITE, *surnamed the Amiable, a perfect specimen of the "suaviter in modo."*
PRINCESS VINDICTA, *half-sister to KING ALFOURITE, "a little more than kin, and MUCH less than kind."*
Prime Minister.
Lord in Waiting.
FLORIDA, *Lady in Waiting on the Princess.*
Page.
The Dragon.
Citizen.

THE EMBASSY.

EMPEROR MATAPA, *surnamed the Merciless, cousin to the Great Bear, &c., a terrible sample of the "fortiter in re."*
PRINCESS VOLANTE, *his daughter—a high-mettled racer.*
Grand Chamberlain.
Captain of the Guard.

FORTUNIO.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A Market Cross. On one side, the House and Garden of
 BARON DUNOVER.

Heralds and Populace discovered. BARON DUNOVER and
his Three Daughters—Grand Flourish.

HERALD. King Alfourite thus maketh proclamation—
 Whereas, without the slightest provocation,
 The Emperor Matapa, in two battles,
 Has drubb'd our troops and stole our goods and chattels,
 It is decreed, that forthwith every man,
 Who has got arms shall bear them if he can;
 And if he can't, he must produce the stumpy,
 And not by no manner of means look grumpy.
 Turn out, or fork out—fight or pay you must!
 Up with your banners, or down with your dust.
 Before the throne your purse or person fling,
 Within three days—unless you wish to swing!
 A special edict—so “long live the King!”

CHORUS.—(“Norma.”)

PEOPLE. Well! if this is n't a precious go,
 We should be glad what is to know;
 Fight or be fined, unless you've a mind
 Just to be hang'd for treason!
 Pray, sir, excuse the liberty,
 But is not this some joke?

HERALD. No!
 Soon you will find 't is Hobson's choice,
 Brave Volunteers—you *must* enroll!
 Or pay your duty to the King—
 So settle which you please on.

PEOPLE. Well, I'd as soon be hang'd as fall,
 Fighting for *any* reason!
 So to secure his *capital*,
 We must reduce our own.

[*Exeunt Herald and Populace, Manent the Baron and his Daughters.*]

BARON. What's to be done? Alas! the heavy day!
 Too old to fight and much too poor to pay,
 Bear arms I can't—indeed, opposed to strife,
 I never could bear arms in all my life!
 A tender youth, the task of drilling bored me—
 A carpet knight, the least exertion floored me!
 A cripple now, to court I can't stump down,
 And to stump up, I haven't half-a-crown.
 I have no son my substitute to be—
 My family consists of daughters three,
 All grown up girls, whose fortunes are their charms,
 So that I havn't e'en a child in arms!
 How to 'scape hanging—hang me if I know!

MYRTINA. My dearest father, pray don't take on so;
 Meet like a man your fortune, good or ill!
 Or if you can't, why then your daughter will!

PERTINA. What! like a *man*?

MYRTINA. Aye, sister, like a man!
 The only way that help him now I can.
 A coat and waistcoat I intend to sport,
 And be my father's deputy at court.

PERTINA. You?

FLIRTINA. You?

BARON. With gratitude I'm almost mute!
 What daughter! you become my substitute?

PERTINA. But should they make you fight?
 [Crosses to her.]

MYRTINA. To fight I'm willing—
 I've oft been told that I *look very* killing.

FLIRTINA. You storm a fortress? [Crosses to her.]

PERTINA. Or besiege a town?

MYRTINA. Before one I can easily sit down.

BARON. You mount a breach?

MYRTINA. Oh, sir, experience teaches—
 I mean at once to mount a pair of breeches!

BARON. Intrepid girl!

PERTINA. But should your courage fail?

MYRTINA. To keep it up, I'll think of Lady Sale!

PERTINA (*aside*). So, so—but two can play, miss, at this game.

Why should this forward chit have all the fame?

I'm quite as bold as she is I'll be bound,

And will shew legs with her for twenty pound!

FLIRTINA (*aside*). In male attire should I not cut a figure?

I'm taller than Myrtina—aye, and bigger!

I don't much fancy handling sword or dagger,

But I'd engage as like a man to swagger!

PERTINA (*aside*). To get a suit, I'll pawn the table spoons!

[*Exit into house.*

FLIRTINA (*aside*). I'll spout the tea-pot, and buy pantaloons! [*Exit.*

BARON (*to MYRTINA*). Fortune your filial piety will bless,
But what, my darling, will you do for dress?

MYRTINA. Why there's your old court-suit, papa, you know,

All the gold lace was stripp'd off long ago,

But still the cloth's not much the worse for wear,

And there's enough of it, and some to spare!

Grant me that suit.

BARON. Your suit is granted—you

Shall have my sword—that's quite as good as new,

For I have never drawn it since I bought it!

Yes—once by chance—when 'twixt my legs I caught it.

MYRTINA. Talking of legs—you'll add your boots of course?

BARON. Yes, and my spurs—would I could add, my horse.

MYRTINA. So of your wardrobe give me quick the key.

[*BARON gives key, and MYRTINA enters house and returns with the suit, which the BARON examines during his solo. The BARON'S line and the Symphony to the Duet giving time enough.*

BARON. How dull without her this old house will be.

DUET.—BARON and MYRTINA.

Air,—"Row gently, here, my Gondolier."

BARON. When you, my dear,

Are gone, dull here

The days will seem to glide;

But let us hear,
 By post, my dear,
 Whate'er may you betide.
 My doublet take, (*aside*) 'T is quite as well,
 The skirts are gone, I see:
 For now no *tails* it has to tell
 Of where it went with me!

MYRTINA. Now, rest thee here,
 My father dear,
 Hush! hush! for up I go,
 To put a light
 Silk pair of tight
 Etcæteras on below.
 Oh, if I look, in male attire,
 But half as well as he
 I saw one night dance on the wire,
 What an angel I shall be?

[*Exeunt into house.*]

SCENE II.

The Fairies' Haunt.—A Picturesque Glen.

Fairies discovered dancing a Quadrille ("Le Danois").
 A Fairy Band, à la Colinet, seated on one side, on
 a bank, and on the other the Queen of the Fairies
 attended.

CHORUS.—To the Quadrille "Le Danois."

Here in our human shape,
 We pass the summer day quadrilling,
 Like mortals, whom we ape,
 Into the fashion falling.
 No more in "Fairy Ring"
 Would well-bred Fay to dance be willing;
 "Grande Ronde" is now the thing—
 When such a figure calling,
 Here, 't is "Pastorale,"
 "La Trenise," "Finale,"
 All "L'Eté,"
 'T is "Balancez,"
 Or "Promenade," till Pistolet
 Pops off—and off pop we—
 To music thrilling,
 Led by the humming bee,
 Our Elfin Colinet!

FAIRY. Break off!—my fairy nose a mortal smells!
Creep into acorn-cups and cowslip-bells!
Make yourselves scarce!

*Music. Fairies disperse and vanish into flowers,
&c.—one sticks fast.*

How now, you clumsy lout!
Is that the way you pull a flower about?
A pretty fairy 'pon my word. Pray who
D'ye think's to sleep in that rose after you?
Crumpling the leaves in this untidy way!

[Putting them to rights.

Now, get you in, you naughty naughty fay!

[Beating him.

And here—whose wing is this? Pray fold it up!
You can't be cramp'd for room sure in that cup!
I'm quite asham'd of you, I do declare,
You're not a morsel like the elves you were,
But that your dress from common habits varies,
No soul on earth could fancy you were fairies!
As I'm your queen, by my stop watch, I've reckon'd—
You've ta'en to vanish, more than half a second!
Who is't that comes?—a girl in male attire!
She needs my aid—does she deserve 't—I'll try her.

[Music. Fairy Queen retires behind trees.

Enter PERTINA in Boy's clothes.

PERTINA. Of Miss Myrtina I have got the start—
I feel convinc'd that I can play my part!
In dress and manner I am quite the beau,
No one would take me for a girl, I know!

*[Music. Trees open and discover Fairy Queen
dressed as an old Shepherdess bending over
some broken ground.*

FAIRY. Oh dear, oh dear!—what shall I do?—oh dear!

PERTINA. Heyday!—why what old beldame have we
here?

FAIRY. Oh, noble sir, for you can be no less,
Help an old woman who's in great distress.
My lamb has fallen into this ditch, and I
Can't get it out—help me, or it will die! *[Advances.*

PERTINA. I help to pull a sheep out of a ditch?
D'ye take me for a butcher you old witch!

FAIRY. I take you for a pert, hard-hearted girl!
Oh; you need not your false moustaches twirl!
You feign to be a man—why, who with eyes
Could fail to see through such a poor disguise?

PERTINA (*aside*). Discover'd!—shame!—I'll try to bluster
—(*Aloud.*) Zoons!

FAIRY. Oh, come—no airs—who pawn'd her father's
spoons?

[PERTINA shrieks and runs out.
Ha, ha, ha, ha! I think that was a twister!
Another step—aye—this must be a sister. [*Music.*

Enter FLIRTINA.

FLIRTINA. I've stolen out by the back-door—what
sport!

In this dress I shall cut out all the court.

FAIRY. Alack-a-day!—alack-a-day!

FLIRTINA. How now?

What do you mean by making such a row?

FAIRY. Oh, sir, my lamb has fallen into this pool!
And will be drowned!

FLIRTINA. Well—serve you right, old fool,
Why don't you take more care?

FAIRY. Alack, good youth,
Lend me a helping hand. [*Advances.*

FLIRTINA. Who, *I*, forsooth?
Do I look like a clown for such work fit?

[*Looks at her legs.*

FAIRY. You look like what you are—a vain young chit,
A silly girl, as any one can see.

FLIRTINA (*aside*). Provoking!—can they really? It can't
be! (*Aloud.*) Harkye, old hag—

FAIRY. Take care what you're about,
Who put her father's tea-pot up the spout?

[FLIRTINA shrieks and runs out.
Ha, ha, ha, ha! So much for t'other!—stay—
Here comes a third—let's hear what she will say.

[*Music.*

Enter MYRTINA.

MYRTINA. This is the road I think—I hope to get
Clear of this wood before the sun shall set,
Or wicked wags will sneer, and say, delighted,
A would-be knight was in a wood benighted,
So let me speed.

FAIRY. O dear, what shall I do?

MYRTINA. Hey-day, some poor old soul, in trouble too!
I can't pass on and leave her sobbing so;
What is the matter, Goody, may I know?

FAIRY. Bless thy kind heart, young man; my pretty
sheep
Has fallen into the water.

MYRTINA. Well, don't weep.
'T is still alive; and I have little doubt,
By hook or crook, that we can get it out.
Here, lend a hand. [A chord.

FAIRY (*appearing in her own shape*). I will, but it
shall be
To help you, charming girl, as you would me.
Be not alarmed, I am your friend, sweet maid,
Although, discovered, you are not betrayed.
I know your errand, and its motive pure,
And will assist your fortune to secure.
Of many things I see you stand in need:
A better wardrobe, and a gallant steed.

[Stamps. Music. A leather trunk rises.
Lo, in this Turkey leather trunk you'll find
Cash, jewels, arms, and dresses to your mind;
You've but to stamp, wherever you may be,
And at your feet this trunk you're sure to see.
Now for a horse.

[Waves her wand. Music. Part of the wood
opens, and discovers a horse, richly capari-
soned.

Behold one in a trice,
Perfect in all his paces, free from vice,
And warranted to carry a lady; never,
In fairy land, was known a horse so clever.
He knows all things, past, present, and to come,
And eats but once a week!

MYRTINA. The poor dear dumb—

FAIRY. Dumb!—he can speak; whole sentences can
say,
Whilst common steeds can only utter "Nay."
Taught elocution by a necromancer,
No horse your purpose half so well could answer.

MYRTINA. Well, I have oft heard mention of a stalking
horse,
But never till this hour of a talking horse.
Pray, may I ask what name he answers to?

FAIRY. Comrade.

MYRTINA. Dear Comrade, tell me how d'ye do?

HORSE. I'm pretty well, I thank ye; how are you?

MYRTINA. Charming! delightful! what articulation!
Without the slightest lisp or hesitation!
I should have thought a horse had spoken hoarser.

FAIRY. His language is not coarse, though he's a
courser.

And, apropos of names, your own should be FORTUNIO, since you've a friend in me.

FORTUNIO. Of proper names 't would be the one most proper;

But who is that man yonder, with a chopper?

FAIRY. A woodman, who cuts down five hundred trees And carries them upon his back, with ease. You'd better hire him.

FORTUNIO. Surely, if I can. [Music.]

Enter STRONGBACK.

Harkye, d'ye want a porter's place, young man?

STRONGBACK. I don't much mind. What wages, sir, give you?

FORTUNIO. Whate'er you please.

STRONGBACK. Well—I think—that will do.

FORTUNIO. To carry messages you won't refuse?

STRONGBACK. I'll carry anything on earth you choose.

FORTUNIO. Your name is—

STRONGBACK. Strongback.

FORTUNIO. Strongback, you're my man.

STRONGBACK. Your carrier pigeon or your Pickford's van.

FAIRY. Here comes another gifted fellow.

FORTUNIO. Pray,

Why has he tied his legs in that queer way?

FAIRY. Because his speed is swifter than the wind; And when he hunts he leaves the game behind, Unless with ribbons he his legs can fether.

FORTUNIO. Shall I engage him?

FAIRY. You can't do better.

[Music.]

Enter LIGHTFOOT, his legs tied with ribbons.

FORTUNIO. Young man, I want a running footman, say—

Will you take service?

LIGHTFOOT. Yes, and bless the day, For I'm in great distress.

FORTUNIO. How came you so?

LIGHTFOOT (*whispering*). Outran the constable; lived fast, you know.

FORTUNIO. Well, you shall have a quarter in advance.

LIGHTFOOT. Oh, sir, to serve you I'd run any chance.

FAIRY. Yonder's a man who may be useful too.

FORTUNIO. Why does he bind his eyes?

FAIRY. The less to view.
His name is marksman, and whene'er he fires,
He kills more game than any one requires;
For objects full five leagues off he can see.

FORTUNIO. Oh dear, but that may very awkward be;
I'm bound for Court, you know, and who can tell
What mischief he may make, who sees so well?

FAIRY. Oh, but he never talks of what he sees;
He's *too* sharp-sighted.

FORTUNIO. Then my mind's at ease. [*Music.*]

Enter MARKSMAN.

An archer blindfold, why you must be Cupid!

MARKSMAN. Indeed, sir, I'm not anything so stupid.

FORTUNIO (*aside to* FAIRY). "*Sir!*" He can't see that
I'm a girl, that's clear.

FAIRY (*aside*). He can; but sees you would n't one
appear.

FORTUNIO. Well, as your sight's so good, pray can
you see
Any objection, friend, to serving me?

MARKSMAN (*taking bandage from eyes*). None in the
least.

FORTUNIO. Then we're agreed. And now
(*To* FAIRY). Madam, I'll make you my most grateful bow.

FAIRY. Stay, you have but three servants.

FORTUNIO. Need I more?

FAIRY. You must have seven; here come the other
four.

The first, who on the ground himself is throwing,
Has ears so fine he hears what grass is growing.

FORTUNIO. He's still more dangerous, unless discreeter;
So good a watch may make a bad repeater.

FAIRY. O you may trust him. There's the second,
blowing
To set yon mills, full six miles off, a-going.

FORTUNIO. A famous fellow he, the wind to raise,
So often done by puffing, now-a-days. [*Music.*]

Enter FINE-EAR and BOISTERER.

FAIRY. These other two will make your suite complete;
One any given quantity can eat,
The other drink the sea dry, if you please.

FORTUNIO. Mercy! and ought I to engage both these?

FAIRY. You'll want them.

FORTUNIO. Well, they'll be expensive pages;
I think I'd better put them on board wages. [*Music.*]

Enter GORMAND and TIPPLER, and are engaged by FORTUNIO.

FAIRY. For each you'll find a sumptuous livery
Within this trunk.

FORTUNIO. Indeed; but where's the key?

FAIRY. In Comrade's ear you'll see a ribbon green.

FORTUNIO (*finding it*). I've got it.

[Opens trunk, and Servants take out liveries and a rich dress for FORTUNIO, sword, jewels, &c., during chorus.]

FAIRY. Now to Court—see—and be seen!

[Music. Fairies re-appear in all directions.]

CHORUS.

Speed, mortal, speed! Seven soon will chime,
You'll just arrive in pudding time!

[A Bank on one side changes to a Car, in which the Fairy Queen ascends, and as FORTUNIO puts his foot in the stirrup to mount the horse, the scene closes on the Tableau.]

SCENE III.

Chamber in the Palace of KING ALFOURITE.

Enter King, leading the Princess, attended by his Minister, a Lord in Waiting, and FLORIDA, Lady's Maid to the Princess.

KING. Hang out our banners on the outward walls!
The cry is still they come.

PRINCESS. Yet no one calls,
Even to say they can't come.

MINISTER. Not a soul
Has yet appeared, who will his name enroll,
Nor who will pay his money; all hang back.

PRINCESS. They should all hang together, in a crack.

KING. Hang all my subjects! that would be too cruel.
We must have patience.

PRINCESS. Yes, and water gruel,
For that 't will come to. Neither men nor money
To carry on the war! A mighty funny
Figure you'll cut! Oh, Minister of State,
How long d'ye think a monarch ought to wait
Before he puts himself into a passion,
When he's fobb'd off in this rebellious fashion?

MINISTER. Madam, I think his Gracious Majesty
Is far too patient.

PRINCESS. So do I—

LORD. And I—

FLORIDA. And I. If I were you, my Royal liege,
The very lives out of the rogues I'd *squeege*!

KING. That would be screwing them a deal too tight.
No, no, you're all four wrong, I'm *Al-four-ite*!

PRINCESS. Aye, joke, that's right, whilst ruin's o'er you
hovering;
You'll change your note, sir, when they change their
sovereign.

KING. Let's change the subject, if not your opinions.

PRINCESS. I'd hang the rebels up in strings.

FLORIDA. Like *inions*!

KING. My people are my children.

PRINCESS. Yes, and purely
You'll spoil them.

KING. Better than despoil them, surely.
In short, the proclamation was too strong.

PRINCESS. Too weak, in short, as you will find ere
long.

KING. Patience, I say. Still hope I fondly nourish.

PRINCESS. Nothing within your realm will ever flourish.
[*Trumpet without.*

KING. D'ye call that nothing? Sure, that flourished
bravely.

Enter a Page.

Good news, or bad, that thou com'st in so gravely?

PAGE. Fortunio, a young and noble knight,
Craves audience of the great King Alfourite.

KING. Desire the gentleman to walk up stairs.

PRINCESS. "Walk up!"—such jargon showmen use, at
fairs. [Cross.

(To Page.) Let him approach. [Exit Page.
Consider, sir, your state.

KING. I do, and think it very bad, of late.

PRINCESS. You're so undignified! I blush for you. [Cross.

KING. Sister, you've dignity enough for two.

Enter FORTUNIO, richly attired.

FLORIDA (*aside*). Oh, Geminy! Oh *what* a nice young
man!

(To Princess.) Look, Madam.

PRINCESS. I am, looking through my fan.

FORTUNIO (*kneeling*). Sire, for my father 't is my humble wish, a Substitute, to serve in your militia.

KING (*raising him*). Most sensible of your polite attention!

Do you take snuff? [*Offering pinch.*]

FORTUNIO (*aside*). Amazing condescension!

KING. Fine weather——

FORTUNIO (*bowing*). Very.

KING. Have you seen the comet?

FORTUNIO. No, sire. (*Aside.*) But feel as if I'd just dropp'd from it.

PRINCESS (*to FLORIDA*). Oh Florida, I'm captivated quite!

In all my days I *ne'er* saw such a knight.

FLORIDA (*aside*). The finest knight that ever I did see. If she's in love with him, good night to me.

FORTUNIO (*aside*). I've lost my heart, as sure as anything!

I never saw a king so good looking.

KING (*aside*). No age could ever boast a youth so pretty;

That he is not a girl 't is quite a pity.

If I could find a fair one half so fair,

I'd marry her to-morrow, I declare.

PRINCESS. Brother, I'm sure you could n't have the heart

To see this stripling to the wars depart.

He's much too young and handsome.

(*To FORTUNIO.*) You shall be

Groom of the Bedchamber, Sir Knight, to me.

KING. Nay, he shall office in *my* household take, Fortunio, Lord Treasurer we make.

FORTUNIO. Lord Treasurer! for such an office, sure——

MINISTER (*aside to him*). Fear not, at present 't is a sinecure.

FORTUNIO. Ah! then indeed, if there is nought to do, I may be quite as capable as you.

KING. Your duty you will learn in half a minute;

'T is but to hold a purse——there's nothing in it.

PRINCESS. You'll eat your mutton with us, sir, to-day,

KING. And crack a bottle in a friendly way.

FORTUNIO. I crack a bottle! Sire, I'd venture, but I fear I could n't, without being cut;

And now-a-days, save at some public spread,

Wine's never suffered to get in one's head.

KING. No, times are changed; I think it quite
provoking
That in my reign there is so little soaking!

SONG.—KING.

Air.—"The days that we went gipsying."

Oh, the days that we got tipsy in—a long time ago,
Were certainly the jolliest a man could ever know!
We drank champagne from glasses long, and hock from
goblets green,
And nothing like a cup of tea was ever to be seen.
All night we pass'd the wine, nor dream'd of hyson or
pekoe,
In the days that we got tipsy in—a long time ago.

Oh, those were days of bumper toasts, or salt-and-water
fine,
Broil'd bones and devil'd biscuits, three-times-three and
nine-times-nine!
When underneath the table you were bound your guest
to land,
And no man rose to go—till he was sure he could n't
stand!
Tea-totallers we'd none to preach 'gainst brandy or bor-
deaux,
In the days that we got tipsy in—a long time ago.

How changed, alas! the fashion now—to booze you've
scarcely begun,
When clattering comes the coffee-tray and all your drink-
ing's done.
Or John informs the gentlemen "he's taken up the tea;"
And 't would be voted vulgar quite, if drunk a man
should be.

A plague upon such sober times—I often sigh “Heigho!”
For the days that we got tipsy in—a long time ago.

[*Exit King, attended by Minister and Lord in Waiting. Princess dismisses FLORIDA and detains FORTUNIO.*

PRINCESS. Stay, gentle youth, and hear a Princess own
A secret—for her breast too mighty grown!
Full ten long tedious minutes have I striven
To quell the pangs by which my heart is riven;
But such prodigious efforts fail at length—
The constant struggle is beyond my strength.

I love! nor care though all the world should know it;
And, in the words of our immortal poet,
Exclaim, "If you love me as I love you,
"No knife shall cut our love in two!"

FORTUNIO (*aside*).

Poh—poo!

(*aloud*) Madam, respectfully I must decline.

PRINCESS. D'ye mean to say, then, that you won't be
mine?

FORTUNIO. I am too much beneath your Royal Highness.

PRINCESS. Madness! Despair! Yet this may be but
shyness.

DUO.—PRINCESS and FORTUNIO.

Air — "Au Clair de la Lune."

PRINCESS. Sir, you can't refuse me,
Treason it would be!

FORTUNIO. Madam, pray excuse me,
There we don't agree.

Honor you I can, but
Wed you—there's the rub!

I am not a marrying man, but
I'll name it at the club.

PRINCESS (*aside*). Yield, oh, Love, thy crown up,
And thy hearted throne!

In this virgin bosom
Hate now reigns alone!

If all your hairs were lives,
Young Mr. What-you-call,
You'll find my great revenge
Has stomach for them all!

FORTUNIO (*aside*). If she don't grow more tender,
I "Police" must call;

That I'm a nice young woman

She don't think at all.

[*Exeunt separately.*]

SCENE IV.

Court - Yard of Palace.

In the centre a large basin of water, with jet d'eau. The Royal Stables. The Royal Gardens. At back, Terrace, with balustrade, beyond which is seen the open country. Sunset.

Bell rings. Enter FORTUNIO.

FORTUNIO. There's the first dinner-bell, as I'm a sinner;
I scarcely shall have time to dress for dinner.

Enter Citizens and Peasantry, male and female.

CHORUS.—*Air, "The Campbells are coming."*

The dragon is coming! oh! oh! oh! oh!
The dragon is coming! oh! oh! oh! oh!
The dragon is coming—we really ar'nt humming,
The dragon is coming! oh! oh! oh! oh!
His mouth is wider than any church door,
And three miles off you may hear him roar!
The terrible glutton eats men like mutton,
And has n't a notion when he should give o'er!
The dragon is coming! oh! oh! oh! oh!

FORTUNIO. A dragon coming! Mercy on us! When?

CITIZENS. Most likely, sir, a little after ten;
That is about the time he likes to sup.

FORTUNIO. How pleasant! Has he eaten many up?

CITIZENS. Whole parishes, and lick'd them clean as plates;

And all the toll-men at the turnpike-gates.

His monstrous appetite's beyond belief;

Sir, he has eaten even Tariff beef!

If you have any doubts, you've but to stay;

He'll clear 'em all up, if he comes this way.

Enter King and Princess, attended.

KING. One woe doth tread upon another's heel,

Uncommon woe distracts the public weal.

War, of my subjects has destroyed the best,

And now a dragon will devour the rest!

PRINCESS (*aside*). Oh vengeance! Now's my time!

(*Aloud.*) No, brother, no;

Fortunio has volunteered to go,

And slay this monster—

FORTUNIO. I!—Well, did you ever?
Upon my word, I never, no I never!

PRINCESS. He is so modest, it is quite distressing;
Indeed, he only wants a little pressing.

KING. If you would be so kind, upon the nation
You would confer the greatest obligation;
And if, by any chance, I could return——

FORTUNIO. Sir, that's exactly what *I* wish to learn.
If I saw any chance of my returning,
I should n't so much mind——

PRINCESS (*taking King aside*). For fame he's burning.
We'll go to dinner whilst you do the job,
And keep some hot for you upon the hob.

KING. Thou'lt not say "No," thy Sovereign supplicates
thee;
Go, be our Champion! "Go where glory waits thee!"

[*Music. Exeunt all but FORTUNIO.*]

FORTUNIO. Fine words, I grant, and easy ones to
utter,
But such, the proverb says, "No parsnips butter."
Now this is all that wicked woman's doing,
Because I would n't listen to her wooing.
What's to be done? Why the first thing, of course,
Take an opinion of my learned horse.
Comrade, my friend, just look out of your stable,
And answer me one question, if you're able.

[COMRADE *puts his head out of the stable-door.*]

COMRADE. Is it the Corn Question? Because I'm
gifted
To speak on one I've seen so often *sifted*.

FORTUNIO. No.

COMRADE. I but joked, for may I draw a waggon,
If you have not been asked to kill the dragon.

FORTUNIO. You're right.

COMRADE. Well, you must do it.

FORTUNIO. Cool, I vow.
Will you be kind enough to tell me *how*?

COMRADE. Call Fine-ear.

FORTUNIO. Fi——

Enter FINE-EAR.

FINE-EAR. There is no need to bawl,
I heard, sir, you were just about to call.
What can I do to serve you?

COMRADE. Say how near
The dragon is.

FINE-EAR (*listening*). As well as I can hear,
About seven leagues, and, it may be, a quarter.

COMRADE. Let Tippler, then, drink up that pond of
water,
And Strongback bring as much wine as will fill it,
And when the dragon's dead drunk you can kill it.

FORTUNIO. Sagacious creature! Tippler, Strongback,
speed!

Enter TIPPLER and STRONGBACK.

BOTH. Here, master.

FORTUNIO. Your assistance much I need.

(*To TIPPLER.*) Drink this pond dry.

TIPPLER. Is that all—in a minute!

[*Goes to pond and begins to drink.*]

FORTUNIO (*to STRONGBACK*). Bring as much wine here
as you can put in it.

STRONGBACK. Yes, sir. [*Going.*]

FORTUNIO. You'll want a cart.

STRONGBACK. A cart—for what?

For such a job I'd scorn to use a knot. [*Exit.*]

TIPPLER. There, sir—I've mopp'd that up without a
wink.

FORTUNIO. What shall I give you?

TIPPLER. What you please to drink. [*Music.*]

Re-enter STRONGBACK, laden with Hogsheads of Wine.

STRONGBACK. I think I've brought enough to fill the
pond;

At all events there's no more wine in bond.

[*Roar without.*]

FORTUNIO. Make haste, make haste, for by that roar,
The dragon's nearer by some leagues.

FINE-EAR. Yes—Four.

FORTUNIO. Then to our posts—he'll do the other three
In a hop, step, and jump, immediately.

QUARTETTE.

FORTUNIO, STRONGBACK, TIPPLER, and COMRADE

Air.—"Master Poll," (*Midas.*)

FORTUNIO. Master Drag,
In spite of his brag,
We'll buffet away from the plain, sir!

STRONGBACK. And, I will fight
With all my might,

COMRADE. And I with all my mane, sir!

TIPPLER. And I'll have a rap,
Though he may snap,
And kick up a woundy racket!

FORTUNIO. I'll hack!

STRONGBACK. I'll whack!

TIPPLER. I'll crack!

ALL. Good lack!

How we'll pepper his scaly old jacket!

FORTUNIO. In spite of his teeth,
Above and beneath,
I'll make him his jaw to hold, sir!
And teach him to dance
At the end of my lance,
As St. George did the dragon of old, sir!
As soon as he's dead,
I'll cut off his head!

TIPPLER. Before 't would be rather rash, sir!

FORTUNIO. I'll dare!

TIPPLER. I'll tear!

STRONGBACK. I'll bear!

ALL. Oh, rare!

And I warrant we'll settle his hash, sir!

[*Melo-dramatic Music. It has become night, and moonlight. FORTUNIO and Servants conceal themselves. Enter the dragon—he sniffs the wine and commences drinking immediately, shews symptoms of intoxication, staggers, reels and falls.*]

COMRADE. Now, master, now!

FORTUNIO and Servants enter armed.

FORTUNIO (*stabbing the Dragon*). "Dead for a ducat,
dead——"

TIPPLER. I'll tell the tale—whilst you cut off the head!

[*Exit.*]

[FORTUNIO cuts off the dragon's head, and sticks it on the top of a spear.]

STRONGBACK (*taking up the body*). I'll bear his body
—it's no load to brag on.

FORTUNIO. Mind—it's down-hill.

STRONGBACK. No fear—I've got the drag-on.

[*Shouts without. Re-enter TIPPLER, with the rest of FORTUNIO's suite, Citizens, Peasantry, &c., the King, the Princess, Nobles, &c., forming a procession à la "Masaniello," Act II.*]

CHORUS.—(*Masaniello.*)

Come, fill to the brim every flagon,
And dance while a leg's left to wag on!
E'en Warwick's old Guy
But a coward seems, nigh
To the hero who conquer'd the dragon.

[*They pass round the stage, and FORTUNIO comes to a halt before the King.*]

PRINCESS (*aside*). Confusion! Conqueror! the dragon
slain!

FORTUNIO (*showing the head to the King*). "Thus
perish all that gives Alonzo pain."

KING. We can't find words to speak our thanks.

FORTUNIO. Then don't.

PRINCESS (*aside*). I cannot bear this triumph—and I
won't!

KING. Money I've none; and so may truly say—
"More is thy due than more than all can pay."
But kings, you know, of honour are the fount,
And therefore freely honours you shall count—
Aye, though you're nine at whist! Yon monster, there,
In your own arms we give you leave to bear;
And, to prove the gratitude we feel,
We'll pass a patent under our great seal,
Declaring, henceforth, 'tis our Royal will
That none but you shall dare a dragon kill!

PRINCESS. That is, indeed, a privilege most gracious!
But, brother, on a deed much more audacious,
This youth is bent.

KING. Indeed—what—how?

PRINCESS. You'll never guess.

FORTUNIO. What is she after now?

PRINCESS. His great ambition, brother, is to go
Ambassador to our most deadly foe;
He vows, without an army or a navy,
He'll force the Emperor to cry "Peccavi."

FORTUNIO (*aside*). Good gracious me! I go their
deadly foe to!

Where does that wicked woman think she'll go to?

KING. Since I can give him nothing, 'tis but just
I should refuse him nothing—go he must.

FORTUNIO. But, sire —

KING. No thanks, we still shall be your debtor.

PRINCESS. And so the sooner you set off the better!

FINALE.

FORTUNIO. Is she determined to make me a martyr?
Does she suppose me Van Amburgh or Carter?
First fight a dragon, then go catch a Tartar,
Is out of the frying-pan into the fire.

KING. If to his courage he don't fall a martyr,
He may depend on the first vacant garter!
Fight with a dragon, then go catch a Tartar!
'T is really much more than he ought to desire.

FLORIDA. O, Etiquette! to your laws he's a martyr,
He dar'nt contradict, though he knows what she's arter,
First fight a dragon, then go catch a Tartar,
Is out of the frying-pan into the fire.

CHORUS. Never was hero more handsome or smarter,
Braver he is than Van Amburgh or Carter,
First fight a dragon, then go catch a Tartar!
He certainly next will the Thames set on fire!

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

*Hall of Audience in the Palace of the EMPEROR MATAPA.
Large Gates in the flat.*

*The Emperor is discovered seated on his Throne, attended
by his Court, Chamberlain, Officers, and Guard. The
PRINCESS VOLANTE and her attendant Ladies.*

EMPEROR. Daughter, we're dull—we've got the devils
blue!
Dance and amuse us, as you ought to do!
[VOLANTE dances.
Enough, we're sleepy—sing, and let your numbers
Wrap our imperial soul in gentle slumbers!

CHORUS—“*Away with melancholy*”—*sung discordantly.*

[*Only a few bars, which are interrupted by Emperor.*

EMPEROR. Silence—odds bobbs, unless you ’d all be swinging.

CHAMBERLAIN. Great sir—you bade us sing—

EMPEROR. D’ye call that singing?

It may be for the million!—hurly-burling!

I would n’t hear it for a million sterling!

So peace! or by the hangman’s shears bereft

You shall not have an ear for music left.

CHAMBERLAIN. Great sir, your servants tremble and obey.

EMPEROR. They ’d better!

Enter Officer.

Well, what have you got to say?

OFFICER. Most mighty emperor—King Alfourite—

EMPEROR. Ha!—what of him? Does he again show fight?

OFFICER. An envoy from his court has just arrived,
Who craves an audience.

EMPEROR. Is the fool nine-lived,
That thus he ventures into our dominions?

CHAMBERLAIN. Perhaps—

EMPEROR. Perhaps!—who asked for your opinions?
Go, hang the fellow instantly. [Officer going.

No—stay! [Officer returns.

We fain would hear what he has got to say,

Which, if we hang him first, he cannot tell—

Let him approach!—after will do as well.

(*Music.*) *Enter FORTUNIO with his seven Servants.*

Now speak, young shaver—what ’s the news with thee?

FORTUNIO. Thus after greeting, speaks my king by me—
To you, who’ve borrow’d all his treasure—

EMPEROR. Borrow’d!

CHAMBERLAIN. A strange beginning!

EMPEROR. Don’t you be so *farrard*!
Go on, young gentleman, you shall be heard.

Borrow’d, I think you said.

FORTUNIO. That was my word.

I thought it not polite to use a stronger—

His Majesty can’t do without it longer,

And therefore sends me, in a civil way,

To tell you he must have it back to-day!

EMPEROR. What follows if we disallow of this?

FORTUNIO. His Majesty will take it much amiss.

EMPEROR. On this fool's errand have you come alone?

FORTUNIO. I've seven servants with me, of my own.

[*All the Servants bow.*]

EMPEROR. You are a pleasant man for a small party!
Our wrath is smothered by our laughter hearty.

[*General laugh. Emperor checks them; laughs; they again echo him.*]

My Lord Ambassador, you've had your jest,
'Tis now our turn—we grant your *small* request,
On one condition,—find, within this hour,
A man who, for his breakfast, shall devour
All the new bread baked in this town to-day.

FORTUNIO. Agreed. (*Aside.*) Here's luck!

EMPEROR. Do you know what you say?

FORTUNIO. Most perfectly.

EMPEROR. Oh, very well, we'll see.
Take heed: if but a crumb uneaten be,
Into a red-hot oven I will thrust ye,
And bake ye all, alive!

FORTUNIO. How very crusty!

EMPEROR (*to Officer*). Go, pile the bread up in the
Palace-court;

Here, from our throne, we will behold the sport.

[*Exit Officer, with some Guards. The Emperor retires up, with his suite.*]

FORTUNIO. Well, I am pretty easy on this head.

GORMAND. (*GORMAND advances.*) I hope you have n't
breakfasted.

GORMAND. Why, sir, I eat a round of beef at ten;
But have n't made a meal—I don't know when.

FORTUNIO. Can you eat all the new bread in this
city?

GORMAND. Lord! If I could n't, sir, 't would be a
pity—

And all the stale besides, just to complete it.
The job's to *get* one's bread, sir, not to *eat* it.

FORTUNIO. You're sure!

GORMAND. Don't be alarmed, sir, it's all right;
A round of beef just whets my appetite.

FORTUNIO. I joy to hear you say so. I declare
Bread's rising very fast in yonder square.

GORMAND. 'T will fall much faster, sir, when I fall
on it.

FORTUNIO. I hope so, for our lives depend upon it.
(*Looking out.*) They're bringing rolls and twists—all
smoking hot.

GORMAND. They can't bring such a twist as I have
got.

[*The Chamberlain advances.*]

The celebrated DUET, "Tell me where is Fancy bred."

Arranged for *Three Voices*, by an Irish Composer.

FORTUNIO, Chamberlain, and GORMAND.

CHAMBERLAIN.	{	Tell me, tell me,
FORTUNIO.		
New, d'ye fancy bread?		
Smoking hot, from oven red—		
Or prefer you <i>stale</i> instead?		
Reply, reply, reply.		

GORMAND. 'T is all the same, sir, in my eye—
On both I've fed, and fancy *size*
In the loaf is all I prize.

CHAMBERLAIN.	{	'T is all the same, sir, in his eye, &c.
FORTUNIO.		

ALL. Let them bring all the stale as well,

I'll	{	Go at it, ding, dong, bell!
He'll		

[*The gates at the back are opened, and several enormous piles of loaves are seen in the courtyard, on a large table or platform.*]

EMPEROR. There is the bread—now where's your
man?

FORTUNIO. He's here.

EMPEROR. Why fellow, can you all that table clear?

GORMAND. I'll do the best your Majesty to please,
But if you would just add—

EMPEROR. Ha!

GORMAND. A little cheese.

EMPEROR. Dost mock us, villain? Eat all that, or
die!

GORMAND. Oh, sir, it's quite a pleasure to comply.

[*Music. GORMAND devours the bread.*]

CHORUS.—(*Corelli.*)

Emperor *and* Courtiers.

What a gulp! oh, goodness, gracious!
Never wolf was so voracious!
Quartern loaves like pills to swallow!
Here 's a chap beats Dando hollow!

Only see,
Goodness gracious!
How capacious
Most his bread-room be!

FORTUNIO *and* Servants.

Down he crams 'em, smoking hot,
What a famous twist he 's got!

[*During this chorus GORMAND demolishes all the
heaps of bread.*]

OFFICER. There 's not a crumb left! will you please
examine?

EMPEROR. Confound the cormorant, he 'd breed a
famine.

FORTUNIO. Bravo, dear Gormand, well may it be said,
That you have proved yourself a thorough-bred!

GORMAND. I ought to have had the cheese, sir, I declare,
The last batch was light-weight—and that 's not fair.

FORTUNIO. Now, great Matapa—I your promise claim,
Restore the treasure——

EMPEROR. No!——

FORTUNIO *and* Servants. *Oh, fie, for shame!*

A monarch pledge his word—and not stick to it!

EMPEROR. Why who the deuce had dream'd that he
could do it!

FORTUNIO. Yet you 'd have baked us had he chanced
to fail,

Oh, sir, your Justice bears a *sliding* scale!

EMPEROR. I was but joking——

FORTUNIO. Sir, a bet 's a bet,
I 'll ask the Jockey Club——

EMPEROR. One moment yet——

Find me a man can drink up all the water,
And one who in a race can beat my daughter;
And to restore your Royal Master's treasure,
We 'll make a point—of full imperial measure!
We swear!

FORTUNIO. By what?

EMPEROR. The Great Bear—whose relation
We have the honor to be.

FORTUNIO. A declaration
No one can doubt, who knows your Majesty;
You are as like a great bear as can be!

EMPEROR. By our celestial brother, Ursa Major,
We swear this time, that if we lose our wager,
We'll pay!—

FORTUNIO. Be witness all then—'t is a bet!
Tippler!—(TIPPLER *advances*.)—Your whistle if you'd like
to wet,

There's a canal, five fountains, and a tank,
To drain—

TIPPLER. With pleasure, Sir—but when I've drank
The water, I shall finish with the wine.

EMPEROR (*aside*). Eh, zounds—if that's the case, he'll
finish mine!

My choice old Port!—my fine Duff Gordon Sherry!
An awkward customer this fellow—very!

[TIPPLER *going*.
(*Aloud*.) Hold, this condition we will not exact.

We had forgotten an important fact,
Our Doctors here, despising drug and pill,
Cure by cold water, every mortal ill!
And should this man possess such powers of suction,
His faculty would doom ours to destruction!
Therefore, my Lord Ambassador, we think,
We'd better drop this question of the drink;
And 'stead of losing all the running water,
Just stand to win upon our running daughter!

FORTUNIO. Content—will't please you name the time
and place.

EMPEROR. The Orange walk—in half-an-hour—

FORTUNIO. The race—
P.P?

EMPEROR. Of course.

FORTUNIO. Sweepstakes—off-sweeping
All the King's Plates and gold cups in your keeping.

[*Flourish and march. Exeunt severally. Emperor
and FORTUNIO with their trains.*

SCENE II.

Another Apartment in the Palace.

Enter FORTUNIO and his Seven Servants.

FORTUNIO. Lightfoot, I need not tell you 'tis your part
To beat the Princess.

LIGHTFOOT. Give me a fair start—
I'll beat the arrow from friend Marksman's bow.

FORTUNIO. You'll want a proper dress to run in though.
[*Stamps—the trunk rises.*
(*Giving him the key*). Look in the trunk—you'll find
one I dare say.

LIGHTFOOT. The very thing. (*Pulling out a scarlet jacket
and hose.*) Your Lordship's colours, pray—

FORTUNIO. Go hence and dress, for you've no time to
waste.

LIGHTFOOT. Sir, if I can make anything, 'tis haste.
[*Exit.*

FINE-EAR. Sir, may we crave a word?

FORTUNIO. I'm all attention.

BOISTERER. Lightfoot has hit upon a rare invention.

FORTUNIO. What is 't?

FINE-EAR. A Flying Steam Coach!

FORTUNIO. Hah!—Indeed!

STRONGBACK. Built on a principle that must succeed.

MARKSMAN. Just like a bird—with body, wings, and
tail.

TIPPLER. Or like a fish—

FORTUNIO. Aye—very like a whale.

MARKSMAN. You think we're joking, sir.

FORTUNIO. In truth I do.

GORMAND. Sir it's in print—

FORTUNIO. Oh—then it *must* be true,
Or I should have said, with all humility,
'Twas flying in the face of probability.

STRONGBACK. We've formed a joint stock company.

FORTUNIO. So, so.

STRONGBACK. Boisterer can puff off any thing you know.

BOISTERER. And Strongback carries on the whole affair,
And all the *onus* will with pleasure bear.

FINE-EAR. Marksman will see the way clear through
the sky.

MARKSMAN. And Fine-ear tell folks when the coach is
nigh.

FORTUNIO. Gormand and Tippler?

STRONGBACK. Why, sir, we all think,
As they can nothing do but eat and drink,
They ought to be directors, and together
Meet upon board days, and discuss the weather.

FORTUNIO. I fear your scheme will end in smoke.

FINE-EAR. Aye, so
I heard them say of gas some years ago.

FORTUNIO. Faith you're right there, and who on earth
shall say,
We may not one day skim the milky way?
Still, in these times of quackery and puffing,
The greatest goose may get his fill of stuffing.

SONG.—FORTUNIO.

Air.—"March, march."

Quack, quack, nothing like quackery,

Humbug, my friends, of the day is the order!

Quack, quack, any jimcrackery

Now will go off with a puff, for the Border.

Pretenders abounding, trumpeters sounding

Every man his own honour and glory:

Truth you're quite right to prize, if you don't wish to
rise,

But if you do, you must get up a story.

Quack, quack, &c.

Come to the Chambers of Clement's or Gray's Inn,

Come to the Solons who rule in "the Row,"

Come to the ball where the heiress is blazing,

You will find humbug from Bond Street to Bow.

Bills, yellow, green, and red, flutter above your head,

Each of some miracle hangs the recorder;

New projects every day melting your cash away,

Till you're obliged to pop over the Border.

Quack, quack, &c.

SCENE III.

A Long Walk, lined with Orange Trees.

On one side the Winning Post, on the other the Judge's Chair, with a bell above it. Enter on one side the EMPEROR leading the PRINCESS VOLANTE, attired for the race, and followed by the Emperor's Court, Lord Chamberlain, Officers, Guards, &c. On the other, FORTUNIO, with LIGHTFOOT, attired for the race, and followed by the other Six Servants.

EMPEROR. This is the spot, the centre of the grove,
Here stands the winning post. In yon alcove
The judge's chair—where seated I shall be—
The daughter to Matapa—here you see,
Fresh as a four-year-old—of matchless speed.

FORTUNIO. Her make and beauty nothing can exceed.

PRINCESS. Yonder is my antagonist no doubt.

FORTUNIO. Fortunio names Lightfoot.

PRINCESS. Trot him out!

[LIGHTFOOT advances and bows.

A scarlet runner, by his legs—

LIGHTFOOT.

Alack,

Red legs are rarer on the turf than black.

EMPEROR. Come!—clear the course.

[Bell rings.

Fair daughter, what d'ye say

To some of our imperial Tokay

Before you start?

PRINCESS. A glass I'll not decline,
To run a race nought helps like racy wine!

EMPEROR. Some Tokay for her Highness.

LIGHTFOOT. And for me. [Crosses.

EMPEROR. For thee!

PRINCESS. It is but fair.

EMPEROR. So let it be!

Give him a bumper! Harkye!

[To Page and whispers—Page bows, and goes
out—returns with goblet which he hands to
LIGHTFOOT.

FORTUNIO.

I misdoubt!

They'll doctor him! (To LIGHTFOOT.) Take care what
you're about.

EMPEROR. Our Chamberlain shall start you when you're
ready.

PRINCESS. Come on then—

LIGHTFOOT (*aside*). Well that stuff is rather heavy!
(*Aloud*.) Where do we start from?

PRINCESS. Yonder in the hollow.

LIGHTFOOT. Then lead the way.

PRINCESS. And keep it?

LIGHTFOOT. That don't follow!

FORTUNIO. Now, Lightfoot, mind you run for your
existence!

EMPEROR. Once round the course, remember, and a
distance.

[*Music. The Princess and LIGHTFOOT ascend the
slope at the back of the stage and disappear
behind it. The Emperor takes his seat in the
Judge's Chair. Chamberlain stands on the
ridge and drops a flag. Bell rings.*]

ALL. They're off!—they're off!

OFFICER. I'll bet a thousand to one
'Gainst Lightfoot.

FORTUNIO. Sir, I take you.

OFFICER. Done, sir.

FORTUNIO. Done.

[*Princess and LIGHTFOOT re-appear, running,
Princess rather in advance.*]

CHAMBERLAIN. The Princess makes the running.

EMPEROR. All my own is.

CHAMBERLAIN. Six to four on her Highness.

FORTUNIO. Done, in ponies.

[*Exeunt Princess and LIGHTFOOT.*]

MARKSMAN. Lightfoot is holding in.

TIPPLER. A pretty race!

ALL. Lightfoot is beaten!

CHAMBERLAIN. He can't live the pace.

FORTUNIO. They're out of sight.

EMPEROR. And will be so, until

They reach the walk a-top of yonder hill;

But as my daughter runs five miles a minute,

It won't be long before you see her in it.

[*Bell rings as the figure of Princess is seen at
the top of the hill.*]

OFFICER. And there she is—

FORTUNIO. Alone, as I'm a sinner!

EMPEROR. Hurrah! I'll bet my crown I name the winner.

CHAMBERLAIN. No takers.

[*The figure descends the hill rapidly, and dis-
appears behind the rise in the stage.*]

FORTUNIO. Where on earth can Lightfoot be?
Listen, good Fine-ear; Marksman, haste and see.

FINE-EAR. Wheree'er he is, he's fast asleep, for I
Can hear him snore.

MARKSMAN (*who has climbed a tree*). Hush! there the
rogue I spy,
Stretched out beneath a tree, full three miles off.

FORTUNIO. Of all the empire I shall be the scoff,
Our lives are forfeit, too! Asleep! plague take him.

MARKSMAN. Nay, don't despair, good master; this shall
wake him.

[*Lets fly an arrow in the direction he has been
looking.*]

FORTUNIO. What have you done?

MARKSMAN (*looking out*). Just touched his ear, I vow.
He's up, and off.

[*The figure of LIGHTFOOT appears at the top of
the hill and descends with incredible swiftness,
disappearing behind the rise in the stage.*]

FORTUNIO. He comes. He'll beat her now!

[*Princess appears on the ridge of the stage,
closely followed by LIGHTFOOT.*]

COURTIERS. Blue! Blue! wins easy!

FORTUNIO and his MEN (*as LIGHTFOOT appears*). Scarlet,
go it Scarlet!

EMPEROR. Volante!

[*LIGHTFOOT bounds by Princess and passes the
post.*]

FORTUNIO and MEN. Lightfoot! Lightfoot!

EMPEROR. Curse the varlet.
[*Coming out of the chair.*]

FORTUNIO. Won in a canter.

EMPEROR. Scarlet?—I'm done brown.

FORTUNIO. Take care, again, sir, how you bet your
crown.

GORMAND. The knowing-ones are done, this time, I say.

TIPPLER. There'll be long faces upon settling-day.

FORTUNIO. O Lightfoot, what a time to sleep you chose!

LIGHTFOOT. I felt so drowsy I laid down to doze,

Thinking by sleep refreshed to run the quicker;

I ne'er was overtaken, save by liquor!

FORTUNIO. It was a narrow 'scape for me, 't is clear.

LIGHTFOOT. Mine was an arrow 'scape, sir; just look
here.

[*Shows MARKSMAN'S arrow sticking in his ear.*]

FORTUNIO (*to Emperor*). Your Majesty no longer can
refuse.

EMPEROR. Our Majesty can do whate'er we chuse.

But 't is a debt of honour, we admit,

And therefore we to pay it *do* thing fit.
But in our court no longer shall you tarry;
So as much treasure as *one man* can carry
We do permit you from our stores to bear.

FORTUNIO. One man?

EMPEROR. We've said it. Take more if you dare!

FORTUNIO. I humbly take my leave.

EMPEROR. You show your sense.

FORTUNIO. Strongback, you hear the Emperor's order.

EMPEROR. Hence!

(*To Chamberlain.*) You, sir, look after 'em and see it done.

STRONGBACK (*to FORTUNIO*). I'll carry, sir, enough for
any one.

[*Music. Exeunt FORTUNIO and Attendants, with
Chamberlain.*]

PRINCESS. I'm so provoked, papa, that I could cry;
At Tattersall's, the favourite was I.

EMPEROR. I'm so enraged, Volante, I could roar;
I never knew you be behind before.

PRINCESS. Beneath a tree, asleep I left him, fast;
How could he manage to be first at last?

Enter Chamberlain, hastily.

CHAMBERLAIN. Where is the Emperor? Oh, sire, sire, sire!

EMPEROR. Now what's the matter? Is the town on fire?

CHAMBERLAIN. No, sire, but all your palace sacked and
plundered

Of gold and silver statues full five hundred—

The costly mirrors and the massive plate—

The jewelled harness and the coach of state—

Treasure untold, in bullion, bars, and cash—

All by one man are carried off—slap-dash!

EMPEROR. All by one man? Impossible! No, no!

CHAMBERLAIN. Let me endure your wrath if 't is not so.
I saw him move the goods.

EMPEROR. If thou dost lie,

Upon the next tree shalt thou hang, as high

As they can swing thee. If the truth it be,

I care not if, instead, they tuck up me.

Is this a time to stand and stare about!

You rogues and vagabonds—arm—arm and out!

If this which he avouches doth appear,

We may write up "Unfurnished lodgings here."

Ring the alarum bell until it crack!

At least we'll have our coach and harness back.

[*Exeunt EMPEROR, Princess, Chamberlain, &c.*

Alarum bell, &c.

SCENE IV.

The Banks of a River.

Music. Enter STRONGBACK, carrying an enormous pile of treasure of every description on his shoulders, followed by FORTUNIO, and his other Servants.

FORTUNIO. Run, Strongback; we're pursued—'t is my belief.

FINE-EAR. Yes, master, I can hear them call "Stop thief."

FORTUNIO. Now is the time your ærial coach to try—

LIGHTFOOT. It's built—we've only got to make it fly!

FORTUNIO. A trifle merely—yet I almost doubt
If we can wait whilst that is brought about!

MARKSMAN. Here comes the Emperor with all his guard!

FORTUNIO. What's to be done?

BOISTERER. I'll breathe a little hard;
And they'll be so completely blown—I doubt
Their running an inch further on this route.

FORTUNIO. Dear friend, to you we'll owe our preservation,

And wait your coming at the railway station!

[*Music.* Exeunt FORTUNIO and all but BOISTERER.

Enter Emperor and Guards.

EMPEROR. Upon them!—charge!

[BOISTERER blows and they all are whirled off the stage.

Oh, here's a precious breeze! [As he goes.

BOISTERER. That is the "puff direct," sir, if you please. [Exit.

SCENE V.

Interior of KING ALFOURITE'S Palace.

(As in the First Act)

Enter King and Minister.

KING. Talk not of comfort to a wretch like me!
My Court is now a Court of Bankruptcy.
Not Mr. Lover, who, as you're aware,
Audits accounts of every Irish heir—
Which, for arithmetic, his fame advances,
Could find a cure for my impaired finances.

SONG.—KING.

Air.—"I love her, how I love her."

E'en Lover! Samuel Lover!

Though he's a dab at L. S. D.

'T would puzzle to discover

One penny in my treasury.

A tyrant beyond measure

Has walked off all my treasure;

And thinks it quite a pleasure,

To have so diddled me.

Enter LIGHTFOOT.

LIGHTFOOT. Hail to your Majesty.

KING.

You come to use

Your tongue—your office quickly—what's your news?

LIGHTFOOT. Great news, great King. My Lord Fortunio's
near,

With all your treasure!

Enter Princess.

PRINCESS.

What is this I hear?

KING. With all my treasure!

LIGHTFOOT.

Sire, the truth to tell,

You'll find some of the Emperor's as well.

We had n't time to pick and choose, in fact;

So took it as it came.

KING.

Judicious act!

PRINCESS (*aside*). What, of my vengeance am I baulked
again?

KING. How is he coming?

LIGHTFOOT.

By a special train.

I saw him start, and then ran on before

To give you notice. (*Shouts without.*) Hark, he's at the
door!

KING. Conduct him to our presence—quickly—fly!

[*Exeunt* Minister and LIGHTFOOT.]

PRINCESS (*aside*). I'll crush him yet, or know the reason
why.

KING. He comes, he comes! With shouts the people
greet him!

Don't stand there, sister, let us haste to meet him.

PRINCESS. It is not meet we should; he wants your
crown,

So pull him up before he pulls you down.

KING. Fortunio false! then never man was true!

Some wicked wag has sure been hoaxing you.

PRINCESS. I tell you, brother, I can prove his guilt.

KING. He was a gentleman on whom I built
An absolute trust.

PRINCESS. And so did I, until
He dared propose your Majesty to kill,
And marry me!

KING. And marry you! Alack,
He must, then, be a monomaniac!

PRINCESS. Brother!

KING. I mean that such prodigious vanity
Is the best proof of the young man's insanity.

PRINCESS. I tell you he's a foe you must beware of.

KING. Let him be taken, pray, the greatest care of;
For though he might not run his sovereign through,
He may be mad enough to marry you.
But wherefore spoke you not of this before?

PRINCESS. I was in hopes he would return no more:
But he's come back, laden with fame and treasure,
And all the people's heads he'll turn with pleasure,
And they'll dethrone you and crown him instead,
Unless you puzzle them to find *his* head.

KING. Ah, me! I haven't got the heart to do it.

PRINCESS. Then leave the whole to me—I'll pull you
through it. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VI.

The Royal Gardens.—Night.

*The recovered Treasure is all pitched at the back of the
stage, and occupies the whole centre of the scene.*

STRONGBACK and the other Servants discovered. Enter
FORTUNIO.

STRONGBACK. There, sir, I've pitched the whole load in
the garden,
For there's no other place will hold it.

FORTUNIO. Pardon
Me, friend, but I am full of grief and care;
I cannot find my Comrade anywhere.

STRONGBACK. Your horse!—why, isn't he in the stable?

FORTUNIO. No.

And I am on the rack! My Comrade, ho!

Answer! you can, unless you are a corse.

"My horse! my horse! a kingdom for my horse!"

Enter King and Princess, attended by Minister, and followed by two Guards.

The Princess!

PRINCESS. Aye, you tremble, and with reason.
Sir, I accuse Fortunio of high treason.
Arrest him, gentlemen. *[They seize him.]*

FORTUNIO. Arrest! pray stay;
At court, it seems, this is a *collar* day.

'Tis shameful, sire—

PRINCESS. Almost as bad, young mister,
As kill a King and marry with his sister.

FORTUNIO. As kill a King?

PRINCESS. Aye, traitor, 't was my word.

FORTUNIO. And marry with his sister?—how absurd!
Since it has come to this, I must speak out—
Madam, pray tell me, for I almost doubt—
Are *you* a lady?

PRINCESS. Do you hear him, brother?

FORTUNIO. Because, if you are one—why *I'm another.*

ALL. A lady!

FORTUNIO. Yes, a female woman, daughter
Of Baron Dunover.

KING. I always thought her
Too pretty for a man—unless 't was me—
“The fair, the chaste, the inexpressive she!”

PRINCESS. Exposed—defeated! I shall burst with spite!
Oh! *[Falls in Minister's arms.]*

MINISTER. Sire!—She's choking!

KING. Verdict—Serve her right.
[Minister carries out Princess.]

(To FORTUNIO.) A crown you merit.

FORTUNIO. Half a one, I'd rather.

KING. Will you share mine?

FORTUNIO. Sir, you must ask my father.

KING. Oh, let us fly to seek him!

VOICE *(without)*. There's no need.

[Music. The pile of treasure gradually opens, and discovers a magnificent Fairy Chariot, drawn by twenty-four sheep with golden fleeces, in which is the Fairy. In front of the chariot is COMRADE.]

FAIRY. He to your union has with joy agreed;
And I have hastened, in my own post-carriage,
To give consent and lustre to your marriage.

KING *(aside)*. A carriage drawn by four-and-twenty
sheep
With golden fleeces!—That's the flock to *keep!*

FAIRY. They shall be yours—the dower of your bride.

KING (*aside*). She heard me. (*Aloud*.) Madam, I'm quite horrified!

FAIRY. Oh, no apologies! They're ewes and rams,
And will breed millions.

KING. Oh, the precious lambs!

FAIRY (*to FORTUNIO*). Had you not help'd me, all this
had been marr'd;
But kindly actions ever meet reward.

FINALE.

Air.—"Here's to the Maiden."

FORTUNIO. Here then our curtain we hasten to drop,—

Our folly indulgently view, sirs.

Don't for a moment to criticise stop,

For that would be folly in you, sirs.

Let the piece pass,

One of its class

At Easter may find an excuse with the mass.

CHORUS. Let the piece pass, &c.

THE END.

JOHN OXENFORD was born at Camberwell, near London, in 1812. He was articled to a solicitor, but, like hundreds of others,

"He penned a story which he should engrave,"

and gave up law for literature. For many years he has been the theatrical critic of the *Times*, and his unusually extensive knowledge of French, Italian, Spanish, German, and Greek literature has given him a dramatic faculty, eminently fitted for his position.

OXENFORD.

He has written several original plays, but is best known from the French. Among the former may be named *"The Dice of Death," "My Fellow Clerk," "A Day well Spent," "Dr. Robinson,"* and *"Twice Killed."* The last named piece has had a long history: after having been greatly successful in the provinces, it was taken up by the years afterwards, and in 1850 it was revived at the *"Folies Talon,"* was again successful, and in 1851 it was revived of nature, was again successful, and in 1852 it was the *Times* critic who said that it was a new piece under a new name.

Oxenford has translated some of Shakespeare's plays, and Molière's *Tartuffe*. He is also a writer of literary literature—especially in criticism, and in the review of plays, and its philosophers. It is to him that is due the article on Schopenhauer, in the *"Westminster Review"*—an article which may be said to have made Schopenhauer celebrated in his own country.

Fairy. They shall be yours—the dower of your bride.
 KING (aside). She heard me. (Aloud.) Madam, I'm
 quite horrified!

Fairy. Oh, no apologies! They're sweet and rare,
 And will breed millions.

KING. Oh, the precious lambs!

Fairy (to Fortenio). Had you not help'd me, all this
 had been marr'd;

But kindly actions ever meet reward.

FINALE.

Air.—"Here's to the Maiden."

FORTENIO. Here then our curtain we hasten to drop,—

Our folly indulgently view, sirs.

Don't for a moment to criticise stop,

For that would be folly in you, sirs.

Let the piece pass,

One of its class

At Easter time, when the mass

CHORUS. Let the piece pass, &c.

THE END.

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A FARCE

IN ONE ACT.

Enter Tax, with a large amount.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MR. EUCLID FACILE.

MR. RALPH RECKLESS.

TOM, *his servant.*

MR. HOLDFAST.

MR. FERGUS FABLE.

ROBERT.

MRS. FACILE.

MISS JULIA FLIGHTY.

FANNY PEPPER.

TWICE KILLED.

SCENE I.

A view by a river side; on the opposite bank are seen the backs of houses—immersed in water, as at Blackwall, &c.

Enter TOM, with a large hamper.

TOM. Come, this will do; though its utility exceeds its beauty; a confoundedly ugly basket, though destined to hold most rare contents: several sugar loaves, a canister of tea—black and green, almonds and raisins in abundance, coffee, rice, and spices, bars of soap, starch and powder, blue enough to stock a small shop. Dear Fanny! if her heart is not won by such a store of valuables, it is indeed hard.

Enter RECKLESS.

RECKLESS. Ha, ha, ha, I've found her—What, you here?

TOM. Yes, sir.

RECKLESS. I have found her, I'll tell you; congratulate your fortunate master, most faithful Thomas.

TOM. Have you indeed found Miss Julia, and how?

RECKLESS. Simply saw her at a house window.

TOM. But you cannot get into that house.

RECKLESS. No; but I have got my mark, the means of hitting that mark are still in fortune's hands.

TOM. And in worse hands they could not be; sir, do give up this scheme. You fall in love with a young lady at a boarding school, correspond with her under a feigned name——

RECKLESS. Yes, you know that arose from the fear of my cousin, old Guineamore, hearing of these matters. I dared not trust my own lady love. You are aware I have immense expectations from him, and that he hates anything like adventures.

TOM. Yes, and Reginald de Mowbray is a much prettier name than Ralph Reckless, but where was I? Oh, a feigned name. Well, the young lady's governess finds out the correspondence, and very properly sends her to her guardian, who takes her into the country, also very properly; give up this scheme, sir——

RECKLESS. Not I; when I have found the retreat of my charmer, the cavern where the treasure is hid, shall I be craven knight enough to fear the dragon that guards it? No, man, not I—so if you have not better advice to give, we'll change the subject. What the devil is that great basket for?

TOM. What? oh, that is an affair of the heart; you have confided all your tender secrets to me, therefore I will do the same to you, sir, if you will allow me.

RECKLESS. Certainly, good Thomas, go on.

TOM. Why, a sort of relation of mine—a grocer, died the other day, without a will, and his stock in trade got divided among six of us. I have borrowed this large crate from Delfs, the crockery-warehouseman, to stow my share in; and am thinking I could not do the genteel thing better, (as my sweetheart Fanny's in service, and has to find such articles out of her wages,) than to make her a delicate present of the groceries, to sweeten my progress in her affections—eh, sir?

RECKLESS. Delicate indeed! that I should have so gallant a man in my service; and where does this happy maiden reside?

TOM. You see that white house, the other side of the water? one of those houses in the water.

RECKLESS. What! the white one?

TOM. Yes, she is housemaid there.

RECKLESS. Oh! ha! ha! ha! Ri tol de rol. [*Dances.*]

TOM. Hey day. Did you tell me to order a straight waistcoat, sir?

RECKLESS. No! tol de rol, I have a thought——

TOM. Why, you do look remarkable thoughtful.

RECKLESS. You see these three bright gold sovereigns?

TOM. Yes, sir! perhaps you will allow me to *feel* them too?

RECKLESS. So I will, Tom, on one condition! send *me* in that basket, instead of the grocery, and carry me to the house where my Julia is secluded.

TOM. Well, sir, but what will Fanny say?

RECKLESS. Never mind her, there shall be a genteel note pinned outside the basket, explaining the contents. Then, I'll give her a couple of sovereigns, so pack up and be gone. [*Exeunt, Tom dragging the hamper.*]

SCENE II.

A parlour.—In centre of stage a sofa, capable of being made into a bed. At the back a globe, covered with a glazed cover. A dining table and chair. A cupboard to open at top and bottom—A large window to open.

MRS. FACILE, *with a pestle and mortar*, and JULIA, *discovered.*

MRS. FACILE. Really, my dear, the best advice I can give you, is to employ yourself about something, it will divert your mind.

JULIA. Divert? I don't want to be diverted, I want to be miserable; it's very unkind of you to try to console me.

MRS. FACILE. I can only say I mean well, and I believe your guardian means well.

JULIA. Yes, so is every horrid thing *meant* well. Our governess used to make us wash our hands in icy water in winter, and tell us it was all for our good. I hate what is for our good.

MRS. FACILE. But consider the impropriety of your forming at school, a clandestine attachment with a young gentleman, of whose very residence you are ignorant.

JULIA. And what is propriety? A creature of imagination, framed by old maids under the inspiration of green tea.

MRS. FACILE. Stop, stop—

JULIA. Oh, what times were those, when I used to look for a note from Mowbray, in the key hole of the green gate, when I used to read it to six especial confidants, who were all dying with envy; 'till one quarrelled with me about a slice of my last cake, betrayed me to the French teacher, who told the head teacher, who told

the governess—and then what an explosion! dragged off hither, without letting me even send my address to De Mowbray. It is a fine thing to be a victim of cruelty at seventeen. And now as you are so fond of giving advice, let me ask you why you are so very severe to that unfortunate little man, your husband?

MRS. FACILE. What you call severity, arises from my strict sense of propriety, of which, I am sorry to say, Mr. Facile has not so strict a sense.

JULIA. No! why for all I can see, the poor dear little man does nothing but sit with his mathematical books before him all day, looking just like our geography master. Then he is such a very easy man.

MRS. FACILE. The very thing I dread; he not only lets me have my own way, but every one else too. He is the confidant of all the young ladies in the village; the very servants ask his advice on every single point, and he gives it—is never affronted.

JULIA. Dear, good-natured soul!

MRS. FACILE. There's that Fanny Pepper has innumerable points to consult him upon—a forward slut, who apes me in everything. If I wear ringlets, she wears ringlets—makes her caps like mine. Now how do I know what she may ask him—and if he can refuse nothing—think of that!

Enter EUCLID, reading.

EUCLID. “X plus Y. equal to—” Ah, my dear, what are you doing?

MRS. FACILE. Can you address me in that calm manner, after what I said this morning about Fanny the housemaid?

EUCLID. True, my love, you did say something; but I don't remember what it was.

MRS. FACILE. Only been married three weeks—come down to spend the honeymoon with your relation, Mr. Holdfast—and already the confidant of all the maid servants, and don't remember what I said!

EUCLID. No, dear, I only remember the agreeable things you say.

MRS. FACILE. How provokingly good-tempered! I am cruelly used by your indifference.

EUCLID. Are you? upon my word I did not mean it. I am not indifferent, am always thinking of you—given, a, b.

Enter FANNY.

FANNY. Please, ma'am, Miss——

EUCLID. Oh, I forgot! while I was out this morning, I bought this case of drawing instruments for you—there, dear.

MRS. FACILE. And so, sir, you hope to atone for your conduct by a paltry present. (*Runs to window and opens it.*) Thus you atone, and thus I treat the atonement. (*Throws case out of window.*)

FANNY (*aside*). Lauk-a-dasy me; how fine that was. I wish my sweetheart would quarrel with me, and send me something—would not I shy it out of window!

MRS. FACILE. There, sir, you see what I have done.

EUCLID. Yes, love, you threw the case out of the window.

MRS. FACILE. And does it make no impression?

EUCLID. Why, it was your own; you had a right to do with it as you liked; it was nothing to me, you know.

MRS. FACILE. Oh! obduracy, in the disguise of good nature

FANNY. Please, ma'am——

MRS. FACILE. What, Fanny, you here! (*Aside to JULIA.*) There, as I told you, her hair dressed the same—the ribbons in the cap too. Well, Fanny.

FANNY. Please, ma'am, Miss Weakley has sent to know if you are going to call there this afternoon?

MRS. FACILE. Oh, yes, certainly—poor Miss Weakley. Yes, I shall call.

FANNY (*whispers to EUCLID*). I have something to shew you, sir, when your good lady goes out.

MRS. FACILE. I shall call—what's the girl waiting for? do you think I can't call?

FANNY. Yes, you can, ma'am, pretty loud, too.

[*Exit.*

MRS. FACILE. And now, Mr. Facile, you ought to be ashamed to stand before me thus.

EUCLID. Ought I? Well, then, I'll take myself down stairs. (*Reads:*) "On gravity—descending bodies."

[*Exit.*

JULIA. How can you be so cross?

MRS. FACILE. Discipline, I tell you. But reach me the decanter of wine from the shelf, that's a dear. (*Pours contents of mortar into decanter.*) There—there's the sleeping draught for Miss Weakley; I made it from a receipt book belonging to my grandmama.

Such a draught! it will make her sleep like Juliet's drug, worthy of the book from which it was extracted.

Enter Two Men with basket.

Well, my good people.

FIRST MAN. We have brought this hamper for Miss Fanny Pepper, and the footman told us to bring it up stairs.

MRS. FACILE. Miss, indeed! Yes, it's right; Miss Fanny Pepper is Mr. Holdfast's housemaid—you may leave the basket. *[Men do so and exeunt.]*

JULIA. Well, while you are finishing your draughts, and the like, I will go and put on my bonnet to accompany you. With very different feelings from the time when I used to put it on to meet De Mowbray at the garden gate. *[Exit, with the bottle.]*

MRS. FACILE. What's that? Oh! goodness, the basket moves—a man!

RECKLESS (*jumps out*). Madam, madam! do not cry out, I entreat you! I am a stranger, yet rely on your generosity.

MRS. FACILE. But this strange intrusion?

RECKLESS. It is useless to conceal anything. You have doubtless heard of De Mowbray—I am he.

MRS. FACILE. The clandestine lover of Miss Julia, a person about whom no one knows anything. But as you have relied on my mercy, I will not betray you—I will assist you.

RECKLESS. Dear, kind madam!

MRS. FACILE. I will assist you to get out, I say. Return into that basket; two of the footmen shall carry you out to any place you may name, no one shall know of your being here.

RECKLESS (*aside*). Oh, curse such kindness! Madam, consider—get into the basket again? I have a pattern of the wicker work impressed upon me from head to foot at present, independent of the lumps and bruises I have received.

MRS. FACILE. I can offer no other alternative. I cannot encourage your addresses to Miss Julia; then I must consider my own character. Return into the basket, and I will go and order the footmen to come up immediately.

RECKLESS. Well, madam, if there is no alternative, send me to this direction. (*Gives card, and re-enters basket.*) Be sure to tell them to keep the right side upwards.

MRS. FACILE, I will, sir; the contents of the basket shall be taken care of to the full value of the article.

[*Exit.*

RECKLESS. And I am to go back like a glass milk-pot, am I not? (*Gets out.*) Snail! leave thy shell. In thy mistress's house, Ralph Reckless, and suffer thyself to be packed up like a fish, and sent off as mute? No, no; I've given the lady my tailor's card for a direction. Ha, ha, ha! (*Looks in closet.*) What have we here?—a broken pestle and mortar, and a stone ball from the garden entrance. These shall go in the basket, (*puts them in*) they will pass for me as well as I did for grocery. [*Exit.*

Enter FANNY.

FANNY. How cross Missus Facile is, and only a visitor too! I shall give her a bit of my mind if she goes on so, not but I like a woman of spirit. How beautiful she did throw the thingummy-gig out of the window—that was fine now; I can give the devil his due. (*Goes to window.*) But, oh! there's a boat party—and, oh! there's my admirer, Thomas—and, oh! he's sitting by a female—and, oh! (*hides her face*) how shocking, horrid, disgusting—he kissed her; it is so low-lived to kiss in the open air! He shall see how I'll trim his jacket when I meet him again! I'll give—but what's this, a basket? M-i-ss, Miss—F-a-n, Fan-n-y-ny, Fanny—Miss Fanny P-e-p, Pep—Miss Fanny Pep-p-e-r, per—Miss Fanny Pepper. It's horrid writing, (*tears off note*) a present, but I won't keep it; I'll—I'll do as Mrs. Facile did, I'll shy it out of window into the water. (*Tries to lift it.*) Oh, gemini, how heavy it is. Hush! there's footsteps.

EUCLID (*without*). So is B to C.

FANNY. It is Mr. Facile; he has no pride, though he is a gentleman—I'll call him. Mr. Facile!

Enter EUCLID.

EUCLID. Well, Frances Pepper?

FANNY (*aside*). I knew he'd come. I have a favour to ask—Are you strong, Mr. Facile?

EUCLID (*aside*). Now what the deuce should she ask that for?

FANNY. Strong in the arm, I mean?

EUCLID. Pretty well.

FANNY. You'll excuse the liberty—you are such a kind gentleman; but could you oblige me by throwing this basket out of the window?

EUCLID. Why?

FANNY. Oh, sir, pardon me, it's a delicate affair.

EUCLID. Delicate affair, indeed, to throw that great basket out of the window; a coal heaver would shine particularly in such a delicate affair! Oh, nonsense!

FANNY. Please do, sir, I've a motive—heigho!

EUCLID. Oh, well—what will they ask me to do next? Here, girl, ask me to do no more. It's confoundedly heavy!

[They lift the basket between them, rest it on the window ledge, and push it off.]

Oh, my shoulder!

FANNY. What a splash! Thank 'ye, sir, thank 'ye; it's gone to the bottom of the river.

EUCLID. Yes, and nearly took my arm with it—oh! oh! oh! Let me impress one thing on your memory, Frances Pepper, next time you want a delicate affair managed, hire a ticket porter.

FANNY. Thank 'ye, sir, thank 'ye, sir, for throwing my basket out of window. That faithless monster's present; I wish he had been here, I'd have asked Mr. Facile to throw him after it; I'm sure he'd have done it, he is so good-natured. *[Exit.]*

EUCLID. Ha! ha! a whimsical request enough. See what it is to be of an easy disposition. What the servants will ask next it is impossible to say. I have already written six letters for the footman, and read as many valentines for the women; and the other day the old nurse asked me to tell her fortune, because she said my books looked like conjuring books; but this basket-throwing—

Enter MRS. FACILE.

is the strangest adventure I ever knew.

MRS. FACILE. Oh, my dear, have you seen a basket—a large basket?

EUCLID. Yes.

MRS. FACILE. Like a hamper, big enough to put you in.

EUCLID. Yes, yes, well—*(aside.)* I had better not say I helped Fanny, or she'll blow up.

MRS. FACILE. Well, you'll promise not to say anything, give me your word.

EUCLID. My love, not I; upon my word.

MRS. FACILE. What do you suppose is in that basket?

EUCLID. Oh, I don't know—pickled salmon. He! he! *(Aside.)* I shall learn something.

MRS. FACILE. It is a man.

EUCLID. Hey—what?

MRS. FACILE. A man!

EUCLID (*aside*). The devil it was. My sweetest, you must be mistaken.

MRS. FACILE. I heard him talk; he is De Mowbray, Julia's unknown lover. He wanted to get out of the basket, but I told him I would have him carried out of the house. You see I want to break off the connexion.

EUCLID. Egad! the connexion is broke off with a vengeance.

MRS. FACILE. But how serious you look—quite uneasy.

EUCLID. Uneasy, I? Ha! ha! quite a mistake! man in a basket—devilish droll! Ha! ha! ha! Oh! oh! oh!

Enter ROBERT.

ROBERT. Please, ma'am, we can't find any basket; we have looked everywhere.

MRS. FACILE. No!

EUCLID. Not found it? How extraordinary! You could not have looked.

MRS. FACILE. Ah! Fanny must have seen it and taken it. You may go. [*Exit* ROBERT. I'm uneasy.

EUCLID. So am I. Uneasy, my dear—how absurd!

MRS. FACILE. Why, suppose that wild fellow has got out of the basket, Mr. Holdfast may meet him.

EUCLID. My love, you need not give yourself the slightest uneasiness on that score. I dare say he has escaped with the basket, out of the window perhaps—oh! oh! oh!

MRS. FACILE. Why you know that window looks upon the river.

EUCLID (*aside*). I should rather think I did know it. La, so it does, ha! ha! He could not get out of the window without tumbling into the wa—ter. Ha! ha! Oh-h-h!

MRS. FACILE. But I'll go and see after Julia; for if the mad-headed couple should meet, I dread the consequences. Be sure you do not tell Mr. Holdfast, if he comes home, there was a man in the basket. [*Exit*.

EUCLID. No, I shall not betray the secret. Here's a pretty kettle of fish! here's a nice business! I turned *Noyade*;—Oh, but it's over—yes, over! I won't think about it. What business had a man in that basket? I'll be comfortable; it was not my fault. I'll read—divert

my mind with study. "Hydrostatics—to find the specific gravity of bodies, immerse the body in water." Curse Hydrostatics!

Enter FANNY.

Oh, you are here, are you? You are a pretty article.

FANNY. Well, so all the men say.

EUCLID. How can you look at me with that confounded smirk, you abandoned woman?

FANNY. Sir! do you mean to say I'm—

EUCLID. No—you are a damned deal worse; you are an accessory before the fact.

FANNY. What fact?

EUCLID. An enormous fact—murder!

FANNY. Oh, Mr. Facile! Ha! ha! you are joking.

EUCLID. Joking, eh! It's all very fine for you to pretend you did n't know a man was in that basket.

FANNY. Oh, a very fine trick. Ah, no, you are in fun; there was a note tied; I have it in my pocket. (*Pulls it out.*) There, sir; pardon me blushing if it says anything soft.

EUCLID (*reading*). "Dear Fan—

FANNY. Deceitful wretch!

EUCLID. "Inclosed herewith you have my master."

FANNY (*screams*). Oh!

EUCLID. Don't scream—don't scream! We shall be hanged if you scream.

FANNY. Oh, dear! oh, dear, oh, dear! Let me look; m-a-s, mas—t-e-r, ter—master. It's right—oh, dear! oh, dear! (*sobs*) we're in a pickle!

EUCLID. Yes, and so is our unfortunate victim. Then you did not know it?

FANNY. No; you know I cannot read without help. I determined to throw that wretch's presents out of the window. I was only thinking of the present.

EUCLID. Ay, but I'm thinking of the future; I did you wrong. I see you are innocent. We are both a couple of innocent—guilty, miserable wretches. Why did n't you throw it in yourself? We'll finish this letter though. [*They stand close together, reading a letter.*]

Enter RECKLESS.

RECKLESS (*aside*). I can't find Julia anywhere; and I dread every minute lest I should meet some cursed person or other who might be more curious than pleasant. Who's that? Bless my lucky stars! my old

friend Facile. I can't be mistaken. (*Slaps on back.*) Facile, my boy!

EUCLID (*aside*). That's the constable. No, sir, not here; it came from the window next door. What, Reckless! Ah, how do you do? (*Aside.*) Where the deuce did he come from?

RECKLESS. I won't say a word about the basket; I'll feign I called to see him. How do you do, my boy? We have not seen one another these——

EUCLID. These four years. So you remember me, and came to call?

RECKLESS. Yes, ahem!

EUCLID. Very kind. But how did you know I lived here?

RECKLESS. Oh, I saw you at the window.

EUCLID. Come, come, we don't occupy the front, and the back of the house is in the water.

RECKLESS. Ahem! Oh, ah! I was rowing past a quarter of an hour ago.

EUCLID. Ah—h—h! And you saw me at the window, did you? You did not see me do anything particular, did you?

RECKLESS. No. (*Aside.*) Good reason, I never saw you at all. No.

EUCLID. Ha! ha! no, of course not. What was there particular for me to do, eh?

RECKLESS (*aside*). What a strange manner he has!

FANNY. And I was not standing by him, was I?

RECKLESS. No.

EUCLID. No, to be sure not.

RECKLESS. What the devil does this mean? They seem uneasy about something. I suppose he has been kissing the girl at the window. Ha! ha! I understand you.

EUCLID. Eh? do you though?

FANNY. Oh, gemini, oh!

RECKLESS. You are a sly fellow, Euclid. (*Whispers.*) Eh?

EUCLID (*aside*). It's all right—no, no, wrong, I assure you. But you always had such odd ideas—still in the same spirits.

RECKLESS. Yes, I can always smile; like that water which wears a smooth countenance, whatever is beneath its surface.

EUCLID (*aside*). Curse his similes!

FANNY (*aside*). I hate figurative language.

RECKLESS. Gad! what a lumping I had in that basket—

I feel quite knocked up! (*Aside.*) A little refreshment—Euclid, my old friend, you know I don't mind taking liberties with you—could you give me a glass of wine?

FANNY. Yes, sir, I saw a bottle in the room where the bas—

EUCLID. Ah—h—hem! the store-room you mean. Fetch it. [*Exit FANNY.*]

RECKLESS. It will be rather acceptable, I assure you. I have just come off a very unpleasant journey.

EUCLID. What? by the coach?

RECKLESS (*aside*). No, by the basket. You mentioned your wife. You are married—and these are your lodgings?

EUCLID. For the present; I don't think I shall stay here.

RECKLESS. Where shall you go then?

EUCLID (*aside*). To Newgate, most likely. That, sir, depends entirely upon circumstances.

Enter FANNY with bottle and glass.

RECKLESS (*drinking*). Ha, ha! another—(*drinks*) very good—no, I don't know that it is so very good. There's a queer twang in this wine—have you ever noticed it?

EUCLID. No—you know I never touch wine.

RECKLESS. Oh, I remember you patronise water. How queer I feel!

EUCLID. Patronise water! what do you mean by patronising water? Oh—ha, ha! you mean I drink it.

RECKLESS. Of course I do. Egad, I wish I had drank water instead of this infernal stuff. I feel quite uncomfortable.

EUCLID (*aside*). So do I.

FANNY (*aside*). So do I.

RECKLESS. Really, there was something wrong—

EUCLID. Nonsense—fancy—

RECKLESS (*puts his hand to his eyes*). There's a swimming— [*EUCLID and FANNY run to window.*]

EUCLID. What is afloat?

RECKLESS. Oh—h—h—I'm going! There was something wrong about that wine—oh—wrong—very wrong—poison—wine—bad wine—poison! (*Falls senseless on the sofa. EUCLID and FANNY stare.*)

FANNY (*rubs her eyes*). What does this mean?

EUCLID. It means there's another victim. Oh, Fanny!

FANNY. Oh, sir!

EUCLID (*smells*). There is something wrong in this wine.

FANNY (*sobs*). Oh—h—h! Now I shall be hanged!

EUCLID. In all human probability. You have got two strings to your bow. So shall I. What makes you pitch upon me for an accomplice?

FANNY. It was a mistake—oh—h!

EUCLID. But yours are such confounded mistakes. There's Mr. Basket in the river—Reckless is here poisoned—you and I shall be hanged—that makes four. We shall have seriously diminished the population.

FANNY. He had no business to want wine.

EUCLID. Dissipated wretch, to drink wine, except after dinner! How intrusive to call on me—I did not ask him.

FANNY. What shall we do with him? Throw him out of the window after Mr. Basket? Oh——

EUCLID. There are half a dozen boats passing. (*A double knock.*) Oh, there's a knock—they'll come up stairs!

FANNY. Oh, I shall faint!

EUCLID. At this crisis, stupid, thick-headed girl! you must not faint at this crisis—I want all your assistance. Lock the door. (*She locks door.*) We'll let him fall into the well of the sofa. (*They do so, by pulling the mattress from under him. Voices heard outside.*)

HOLDFAST (*without—knocking*). Euclid! Euclid!

MRS. FACILE (*without*). Euclid! Euclid, my love!

FANNY. Oh dear, how heavy!

EUCLID. And there they are outside. There, put the mattress—that's right—oh! Now I'll let them in.

FANNY. But Mrs. Facile must not find me locked up with you. You know of what a queer turn of mind she is.

EUCLID. Well, here—(*takes cover off globe, and puts it on her head. Takes up book.*)

HOLDFAST. { Euclid! Euclid!

MRS. FACILE. {

EUCLID (*opens door*). Well, come in.

Enter MR. HOLDFAST and MRS. FACILE.

MRS. FACILE. Well, sir, you hear us at last.

EUCLID. At last!—what, did you call more than once, dear?

MRS. FACILE. Once, indeed! we thought you had lost your hearing.

HOLDFAST. Yes, and the door locked. The lady began to grow jealous. She thought some one else might

be locked in. Never mind, says I, there's no murder going on.

MRS. FACILE. But what were you doing, eh, dear?

EUCLID. Studying, to be sure—a new subject—how to make bodies occupy the smallest space. Don't you see my book?

MRS. FACILE. Yes, I see a book—upside down.

EUCLID. Eh? ahem! Ah, my dear, when you are so used to reading as I am, you won't care which way a book stands.

MRS. FACILE. And what's the matter?—you look as pale as a ghost.

EUCLID. Ghost?

HOLDFAST. Ha! ha! ha! talking about ghosts, I expect my friend Fable. You will be delighted with Fable—a strange fellow, who thinks a legend is attached to every house—a firm believer in ghosts, goblins, and all sorts of curiosities—and no wonder, for he himself is a greater curiosity than all he believes in. But I hope we have not interrupted your studies? We want your decision on a geographical discussion. I maintain that Petersburg is sixty degrees, north latitude—

MRS. FACILE. Sixty-one and a half, my dear sir.

EUCLID. Sixty—

MRS. FACILE. One and a half. Obstinate creature.

HOLDFAST. Well, do not quarrel. Mr. Feargus Fable, my old friend's son, will be here in a minute, and expects to find us a quiet family.

Enter JULIA.

Here, Julia, you were at school last—what is the latitude of Petersburg.

JULIA. I forget, I am sure—and the terrestrial globe is gone to be repaired. (*Pointing to cover, which conceals FANNY.*) It seems to have come home.

HOLDFAST. Take off the cover, Euclid.

EUCLID (*aside*). Another incident! No, no—this globe is dreadfully inaccurate—full of mistakes.

MRS. FACILE. Nonsense, dear, it will do.

EUCLID. No, no, no.

JULIA. How very warm he is.

MRS. FACILE. What is come to you? I may look at it, and will!

EUCLID. No, no; don't touch it!

MRS. FACILE. But, Mr. Euclid, I insist—

HOLDFAST. True, true—the globe was made to be looked at. Let us settle our dispute.

EUCLID. The dispute will never be settled.

[MRS. FACILE advances again to globe, EUCLID keeping her back; globe moves off.

HOLDFAST. Ha, ha, ha! the globe moves in an eccentric orbit—ha! ha!

MRS. FACILE. I see it all; it is some evil creature concealed under the globe cover! I'll follow it.

JULIA. So will I.

EUCLID (*holding her back*). No, no, no!

HOLDFAST. Ha! ha! ha!

Enter FABLE, as they approach door.

Ah, Fable, my friend—how are you? You have come in time to meet—

EUCLID. A quiet family.

MRS. FACILE. Sir, you are the murderer of—

EUCLID. Murderer—of what?

MRS. FACILE. Of my happiness, sir.

EUCLID. Oh, that's all, is it? Ha! ha! that's nothing.

HOLDFAST. Nay, Mr. Facile, you are going too far.

JULIA. He is getting a most horrid husband.

MRS. FACILE. He'll break my heart! (*Crying.*)

FABLE. Crying, too! A charming family—and I seem to have called at a crisis.

EUCLID (*aside*). I have a thought! My dear, you know the gentleman whom I threw—ahem!

MRS. FACILE. Sir!

EUCLID. You know—the gentleman in the basket I mean.

MRS. FACILE. Well?

EUCLID (*aside*). He came in here—you lost him, you know—and hearing Mr. Holdfast, I popped the cover on him—it was he. (*Aside.*) I wish it had been!

MRS. FACILE. Oh, is that all?—what a clever man you are, Euclid. That was nothing, Mr. Holdfast—nothing at all.

HOLDFAST. How very satisfactory!

MRS. FACILE. Only a frolic of my husband's, funny little man. He meant to astonish you.

HOLDFAST. Egad, he succeeded, too! I never was so struck in my life!

FABLE. Nor I. I thought there was a legend attached to the house!

EUCLID. And yet, you see, you had doubts of my fidelity, when I was only guilty of—(*aside*)—murder.

MRS. FACILE. Do not be angry; you know appearances were against you.

HOLDFAST. Well, what say you to a stroll on the banks of the river, while supper is getting ready?

JULIA. Oh, delightful! this is the most romantic time, twilight.

FABLE. Yes, the very moment for a ghost story!

MRS. FACILE. Come, Euclid—

FABLE. Well, then, come along, and I will tell you a most pleasant story about the ghost of a man who was drowned near this spot. [*Exeunt all but EUCLID.*]

EUCLID. Here I am alone at last. What an awful day I have had. Two murders and a row! I wonder where my unfortunate accomplice is?

Enter FANNY.

Ah, Fanny, heigho! How do you do, Fanny?

FANNY. Very ill, indeed, Mr. Facile; think of my nerves being in such a weak state, from you know what.

EUCLID. Yes.

FANNY. And then my having to cut capers with that nasty thing over my head; I should not wonder if I took to my bed and died.

EUCLID. Then you may think yourself very fortunate, I assure you. I expect no such luck as to die in my bed.

FANNY. I tried to amuse myself; I took up an old volume of the Newgate Calendar.

EUCLID. Horrid book! It will be increased some pages soon, I dare say.

FANNY. It was about a man who murdered another man.

EUCLID. Only killed one man! A mere babe of innocence compared with you and me; but I shall sit up all night, and you must do the same, and we'll convey, you know what, out of here, and pitch it in the river.

Enter ROBERT with cloth, knives, &c.; lays cloth.

Seem as if nothing had happened.

FANNY. Yes; but don't talk, Robert is looking.

ROBERT. Here, Fanny, help me to move this sofa. How remarkably heavy it is; it feels heavier than usual.

FANNY. Heavy! I think it feels lighter than usual. Oh dear! there that will do.

Enter HOLDFAST, MRS. FACILE, JULIA, and FABLE.

Exit ROBERT.

FABLE. A delightful family; the young lady evidently voted me a bore every time I opened my mouth, and the

old man calls ancient traditions a humbug. (*Aside.*) Goths!

HOLDFAST. You must be hungry, sir—have an appetite for your supper.

FABLE. Why, to tell you the truth, I am rather so; have not tasted a morsel since one o'clock.

HOLDFAST. Fortunate! we have a game supper to-night—grouse and ptarmigan, which I think you'll enjoy.

FABLE (*aside*). That's the first pleasant thing I've heard since I came here.

EUCLID (*aside*). But I have no appetite.

Enter ROBERT.

ROBERT. Please, Mr. Fable, your man says there's not a lodging to be had in the village.

HOLDFAST. How unfortunate, and every bed here is occupied. (FANNY, *who is going in and out with supper things, during this dialogue enters with a tray.*) Stop! I have it; that sofa will make up into a bed; you shall have that. (FANNY *screams and drops the tray.*)

FABLE. Capital family! servants drop the supper.

MRS. FACILE. Careless slut, what did you drop the tray for?

FANNY. I tell you what, ma'am, I don't get no wages of you—you're only a visitor, and I won't stand being talked to by you. So if you attempts to blow me up, I'll give you a bit of my mind, more mayhap than you like.

FABLE. There's another row! more quietness. Servants so civil—oh, beautiful!

HOLDFAST. Ha, ha, ha! a pretty business; it's too late to get anything. Well, ladies and gents, I am very sorry—very sorry to send you supperless to bed; but you see all the circumstances—the supper is dropped, so I've no other course than to drop the subject.

FABLE. Splendid entertainment!

HOLDFAST. We have nothing to do but to retire for the night, and leave you, Fable, to repose on the sofa bed.

FANNY. Sir! Oh, oh!—sir, the sofa can't be made up—we have no bed.

EUCLID (*aside*). Some good spirit inspired that thought—a reprieve.

FABLE. Oh, very well then, I'll lay down on the sofa as it is. (*Aside.*) Charming accommodation!

HOLDFAST. Why, my dear sir, I see no other course. I am very sorry you came—

EUCLID (*aside*). So am I.

HOLDFAST. Under such awkward circumstances; always happy to see you, you know.

MRS. FACILE. Well, I think we may as well retire; don't you, Mr. Facile?

EUCLID. Ahem! My dear, I must—that is—yes, I must sit up rather late, to finish a job I have in hand—an article for the Philosophical Repository.

MRS. FACILE. Ah, if your gallantry were equal to your philosophy, what a different husband you would be.

[*Exeunt* MRS. FACILE and JULIA, with candle.

HOLDFAST. Good night; you will not find your night's rest spoiled by a hot supper, Fergus, ha, ha, ha! [*Exit.*

EUCLID (*whispers*). Fanny, as soon as he is asleep, you must come here with me, bring your scissors, and we'll cut a certain gentleman out of the side of the sofa; for we shall not be able to fish him up while this fellow is asleep over him.

FANNY. Suppose we wake him.

EUCLID. Then we must kill him too. [*Exit.*

FABLE. Rather a pretty girl that! I'll talk to her. You need not hurry yourself, my dear.

FANNY. I don't wish to keep you from sleeping, sir.

FABLE. I ain't at all sleepy.

FANNY. Horrid man! how inconvenient! (*Aside.*) You must be sleepy; you ought to be sleepy; and the best thing you can do is, to go to sleep as fast as you can, and continue sleeping as soundly as possible.

[*Exit* FANNY.

FABLE. I'll go to-morrow. Hang me if ever I met with such a family in my life! (*Lies down on sofa.*) Such capering, quarrelling, blowing up and fasting. Ugh! let me go to sleep and forget their existence. (*EUCLID and FANNY are seen at the door with scissors and dark lanthorn.*) Charming family—supper dropped—(*Dosing.*)

EUCLID. He's going off.

FANNY. Yes, so shall I to-morrow. To Merrikey most likely.

EUCLID. But now to business.

FANNY. Heigho! this is not making a business of a pleasure.

EUCLID. Look at his ugly face—he is asleep.

[*Holds lanthorn in FABLE's face.*

FABLE (*starting up and knocking lanthorn out of EUCLID's hand with his head*). What the devil is that?

Oh, my head! There was a flash—and a rap on the skull—and a jingle! What the devil can it mean?

[*Stage dark.*]

EUCLID. Now what shall we do? We are extinguished.

FANNY. Oh, my poor nerves! How thick-headed of the man to wake! We shall never get the poor gentleman out.

FABLE. There is a kind of whispering noise. Egad! there must be a legend attached to this house. I'm uncomfortable.

FANNY. } So am I.
EUCLID. }

EUCLID. We'll find the way out. Where's the door?
[*Groping about—sneezes.*]

FABLE. The cat's in the room, sure. (*The mattress rises up and down.*) What on earth is this? there's something moves—there must be a legend! Oh! keep quiet there!

FANNY. I can't find the door. Some one must have taken it off its hinges.

EUCLID. Yes, and that cursed fellow is going to hallo.

[*RECKLESS darts up, throws the mattress, with FABLE on it, to a considerable distance.*]

FABLE. Murder! the devil! thieves! fire! Mr. Holdfast!

Enter HOLDFAST, with candle. EUCLID and FANNY throw their arms round RECKLESS's neck.

HOLDFAST. What an infernal noise! What is the meaning of all this? Three hugging one another, and a fourth bawling out murder! Who the deuce is this?

EUCLID. Oh, I forgot—you are not introduced. Mr. Holdfast, Mr. Reckless—Mr. Reckless, Mr. Holdfast!

HOLDFAST. Very proud—very happy. How the devil did he get here?

FANNY. You dear man, for keeping alive. Oh, you dear.

EUCLID. A particular friend of mine.

HOLDFAST. A particular friend of Fanny's too, it seems? And what was the matter with you, Fergus?

FABLE. Matter! Everything. Your sofa chucks people on the floor, Mr. Holdfast. [*Bell rings.*]

HOLDFAST. More visitors?

Enter ROBERT.

ROBERT. A man wants to see Fanny Pepper. He has found a basket in the river directed to—

FANNY. Send him away. I don't want it. Oh, I forgot that in my joy—I forgot there was two of them. I will not have the basket.

EUCLID. No. Robert, kick the man down stairs and the basket after him.

HOLDFAST. Nonsense! You don't know what's in the basket.

FANNY. Oh, but I do.

EUCLID. No, you don't.

FANNY. No, no—no more I do. But I hate baskets; they frightened me, when a child, with a wicker-work rattle.

HOLDFAST. It may be something valuable.

EUCLID. Well, what's that to us, if the girl don't want it? We have no right to cram things down her throat.

TOM (*without*). Mr. Reckless is here—I know he is.

RECKLESS. That's my rascal's voice. I'm here.

Enter Tom, drunk.

FANNY. That faithless Tom!

TOM (*hiccups*). I've brought a letter, sir. (*Gives letter.*) I knew you was here, 'cos you know I ha—ha—And I know what the letter is about, the bearer thereof told me thereof—old Guineamore is no more.

RECKLESS. I am De Mowbray; my real name is Reckless. This letter will convince you I have a handsome fortune at my disposal, if I may be allowed to lay it at the feet of Miss Flighty.

EUCLID. Mowbray! Mowbray! here! You did not come in a basket, and see my wife?

RECKLESS. Yes, but I did though.

EUCLID. Then there's nobody killed, tol-de-rol! Fanny, there's nobody killed.

Enter MRS. FACILE and JULIA.

JULIA. De Mowbray!

RECKLESS. Reckless, dear Julia, if you please.

HOLDFAST. Yes, my dear, he is a gentleman of whom I approve, and you may take him as soon as you please.

TOM. And, Fanny, we cannot do better than follow so good an example. (*Takes her hand.*)

FABLE. A monstrous pleasant joke. Catch me here again in a hurry.

HOLDFAST. What's all this about a basket?

EUCLID. Why this gentleman has been twice killed. I'll tell you all at breakfast; now let us retire to rest after the troubles of this eventful night, and contrive not to dream.

FANNY. At any rate not of bottles and baskets.

EUCLID. And now, ladies and gentlemen, that you've seen my friend, Reckless, "Twice Killed," let us hope that you will, at length, allow him to live uninterruptedly—uninterruptedly, did I say? No; for if my innocent delinquencies did serve to amuse you, I shall feel the greatest pleasure in killing him twice more to-morrow.

TOM TAYLOR
THE END.
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CHARLES READE

What a well-lit room! I have never seen a room so well-lit before. I'll tell you all at breakfast; now let us retire to rest after the troubles of this eventful night, and converse not to dream.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, that you've seen my friend, Reckless, "Twice Killed," let us hope that you will, at length, allow him to live untroubledly—uninterruptedly, did I say? Yes, for if my innocent delinquencies did serve to annoy you, I shall feel the greatest pleasure in killing him twice more to-morrow.

Holdfast. It may be something valuable. Well, what's that to us, if the girl don't want it? We have no right to cram things down her throat.

Tom (without). Mr. Reckless is here—I know he is. Reckless. That's my father's voice, I'm here.

Enter Tom, drunk.

Fanny. That faithless Tom! Tom (hiccup). I've brought a letter, Mr. (Gives letter.) I know you was here, you know I ha—ha—And I know what the letter is about, the bearer thereof told me so—old Guinevere is no more.

Reckless. I am De Mowbray; my real name is Reckless. This letter will convey to you a handsome fortune at my disposal, but I may be allowed to lay it at the feet of Miss Flight.

Evelyn. Mowbray! Mowbray! here! You did not come in a basket, and see my wife?

Reckless. Yes, but I did though.

Evelyn. Then there's nobody killed, to-day, Fanny, there's nobody killed.

Enter Mrs. Fitch and Julia.

Julia. De Mowbray!

Reckless. Reckless, dear Julia, if you please.

Holdfast. Yes, my dear, he is a gentleman of whom I approve, and you may take him as soon as you please.

Tom. And, Fanny, we cannot do better than follow so good an example. *(Takes her hand.)*

Fanny. A monstrous pleasant joke. Catch me here again in a hurry.

TOM TAYLOR

AND

CHARLES READE.

In spite of the example set by our early dramatists, there has been little disposition, among English authors, towards a copartnership in dramatic production. There was something piquant in the constant, and successful, association of Messrs. Taylor and Reade; and although of late Mr. Reade's activity in the field of fiction which seem to have withdrawn him altogether from the stage, the constant success of "Masks and Faces"—written by the two—keeps their names associated in the public mind.

Tom Taylor was born at Chesham, in 1817. He went to the Glasgow University, and afterwards to Cambridge, where he subsequently became a Fellow of Trinity College. The Law was the profession chosen by him, and he was called to the bar in 1844. He was the first Professor of English Literature at the London University College; and became known as a contributor to "Punch", especially to "Punch". He is connected with Charles Reade, and since he has been very prolific and successful—at present he is the chief reliance of managers; three or four theatres at a time may be found playing his pieces, and all of them anxious to secure new ones.

Tom Taylor is only a dramatist in the hours of leisure. His duties as Secretary to the Board of Health necessarily occupying the greater part of his time. This makes his productivity, as a writer, the more surprising. Among his various attainments must be named a knowledge of Art, which caused him to be selected as the editor of Haydon's and Leslie's autobiographies.

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MASKS AND FACES;

OR,

BEFORE AND BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

A COMEDY

IN TWO ACTS.

*The Green Room of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden.
A Fire-place, with a chimney, in which, on which
a call is wafered.*
Mrs. Clive, seated.

CLIVE. Who says so?
Quin. The theatre.
Clive. Of course, of course.
Quin. The theatre, the theatre.
Soap. are invited to dine.
Clive. Then I shall eat no dinner.
Quin. Pooh! There is to be a haunch that will
counterpoise in one hour a century of censure. Let them
talk! the mouth will revenge the ears of Falstaff;—be-
sides, Snarl is the only ill-natured one—Soap prais-
people, don't he?
Clive. Don't be silly, Quin! Soap's praise is only
a pin for his brother executioner to hang abuse on—
this means Snarl, who could not invent even ill-nature.

CHARLES BRADY is better known as the author of "Never Too Late to Mend", "Christie Johnstone", and other novels, than as a dramatist, although even in the latter character his productivity has been considerable. Of biographical detail little has transpired; of that little all which need here be noted is that he was educated at Oxford, and has been called to the bar; and that during the height of his career he was the manager of the Strand Theatre for a few weeks.

SIR CHARLES POMANDER.

MR. ERNEST VANE.

COLLEY CIBBER.

QUIN.

TRIPLET.

LYSIMACHUS TRIPLET.

MR. SNARL.

MR. SOAPER.

JAMES BURDOCK.

COLANDER.

HUNDSDON.

Call-Boy.

POMPEY.

MRS. VANE.

PEG WOFFINGTON.

KITTY CLIVE.

MRS. TRIPLET.

ROXALANA.

Maid.

MASKS AND FACES;

OR,

BEFORE AND BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

*The Green Room of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden.
A Fire-place, with a Looking-glass over it, on which
a call is wafered. Curtain rises on MR. QUIN and
MRS. CLIVE, seated each side of Fire-place.*

CLIVE. Who dines with Mr. Vane to-day besides ourselves?

QUIN. His inamorata, Mrs. Woffington, of this theatre.

CLIVE. Of course. But who else?

QUIN. Sir Charles Pomander. The critics, Snarl and Soaper, are invited, I believe.

CLIVE. Then I shall eat no dinner.

QUIN. Pooh! There is to be a haunch that will counterpoise in one hour a century of censure. Let them talk! the mouth will revenge the ears of Falstaff;—besides, Snarl is the only ill-natured one—Soaper praises people, don't he?

CLIVE. Don't be silly, Quin! Soaper's praise is only a pin for his brother executioner to hang abuse on: by this means Snarl, who could not invent even ill-nature,

is never at a loss. Snarl is his own weight in wormwood; but Soaper is—hush!—hold your tongue.

Enter SNARL and SOAPER. QUIN and CLIVE rise.

CLIVE (*with engaging sweetness*). Ah! Mr. Snarl! Mr. Soaper! we were talking of you.

SNARL. I am sorry for that, madam.

QUIN. We hear you dine with us at Mr. Vane's.

SOAPER. We have been invited, and are here to accept. I was told Mr. Vane was here.

QUIN. No; but he is on the stage.

SNARL. Come, then, Soaper.

[*They move towards door.*]

SOAPER (*aside*). Snarl!

SNARL. Yes. (*With a look of secret intelligence.*)

SOAPER (*crosses slowly to CLIVE*). My dear Mrs. Clive, there was I going away without telling you how charmed I was with your Flippanta; all that sweetness and womanly grace, with which you invested that character, was——

SNARL. Misplaced. Flippanta is a vixen, or she is nothing at all.

SOAPER. Your Sir John Brute, sir, was a fine performance: you never forgot the gentleman even in your cups.

SNARL. Which, as Sir John Brute is the exact opposite of a gentleman, he ought to have forgotten. [*Exit.*]

SOAPER. But you must excuse me now; I will resume your praise at dinner-time. [*Exit, with bows.*]

CLIVE (*walks in a rage*). We are the most unfortunate of all artists. Nobody regards our feelings. (*Quin shakes his head.*)

Enter Call-Boy.

CALL-BOY. Mr. Quin and Mrs. Clive! [*Exit.*]

QUIN. I shall cut my part in this play.

CLIVE (*yawns*). Cut it as deep as you like, there will be enough left; and so I shall tell the author if he is there. [*Exeunt QUIN and CLIVE.*]

Enter MR. VANE and SIR CHARLES POMANDER.

POMANDER. All this eloquence might be compressed into one word—you love Mrs. Margaret Woffington.

VANE. I glory in it.

POMANDER. Why not, if it amuses you? We all love an actress once in our lives, and none of us twice.

VANE. You are the slave of a word, Sir Charles Pomander. Would you confound black and white because both are colours? Actress! Can you not see that she is

a being like her fellows in nothing but a name? Her voice is truth, told by music: theirs are jingling instruments of falsehood.

POMANDER. No—they are all instruments; but hers is more skilfully tuned and played upon.

VANE. She is a fountain of true feeling.

POMANDER. No—a pipe that conveys it, without spilling or retaining a drop.

VANE. She has a heart alive to every emotion.

POMANDER. And influenced by none.

VANE. She is a divinity to worship.

POMANDER. And a woman to fight shy of. No—no—we all know Peg Woffington; she is a decent actress on the boards, and a great actress off them. But I will tell you how to add a novel charm to her. Make her blush—ask her for the list of your predecessors.

VANE (*with a mortified air*). Sir Charles Pomander! But you yourself profess to admire her.

POMANDER. And so I do, hugely. Notwithstanding the charms of the mysterious Hebe I told you of, whose antediluvian coach I extricated from the Slough of Despond, near Barnet, on my way to town yesterday, I gave La Woffington a proof of my devotion only two hours ago.

VANE. How?

POMANDER. By offering her three hundred a-year—house—coach—pin-money—my heart—and the et ceteras.

VANE. You? But she has refused.

POMANDER. My dear Arcadian, I am here to receive her answer. (VANE crosses.) You had better wait for it before making your avowal.

VANE. That avowal is made already; but I will wait, if but to see what a lesson the calumniated actress can read to the fine gentleman. [*Exit.*]

POMANDER. The lesson will be set by me—Woffington will learn immediately. It is so simple, only three words, £. s. d. [*Exit.*]

TRIPLET (*speaking outside*). Mr. Rich not in the theatre? Well, my engagements will allow of my waiting for a few minutes.

Enter TRIPLET and Call-Boy. (TRIPLET *has a picture wrapped in baize and without a frame.*)

And if you will just let me know when Mr. Rich arrives (*winks—touches his pocket*). Heaven forgive me for raising groundless expectations!

CALL-BOY. What name, sir?

TRIPLET. Mr. Triplet.

CALL-BOY. Triplet! There is something left for you in the hall, sir. *[Exit.]*

TRIPLET. I knew it. I sent him three tragedies. They are accepted; and he has left me a note in the hall, to fix the reading—at last. I felt it must come, soon or late; and it has come—late. Master of three arts, painting, writing, and acting, by each of which men grow fat, how was it possible I should go on perpetually starving. But that is all over now. My tragedies will be acted, the town will have an intellectual treat, and my wife and children will stab my heart no more with their hungry looks.

Enter Call-Boy with parcel.

CALL-BOY. Here is the parcel for you, sir. *[Exit.]*

TRIPLET (*weighs it in his hand*). Why, how is this? Oh, I see; he returns them for some trifling alterations. Well, if they are judicious, I shall certainly adopt them, for (*opening the parcel*) managers are practical men. My tragedies!—Eh? here are but two! one is accepted!—no! they are all here (*sighs*). Well (*spitefully*), it is a thousand pounds out of Mr. Rich's pocket, poor man! I pity him; and my hungry mouths at home! Heaven knows where I am to find bread for them to-morrow! Everything that will raise a shilling I have sold or pawned. Even my poor picture here, the portrait of Mrs. Woffington from memory—I tried to sell that this morning at every dealer's in Long Acre—and not one would make me an offer.

Enter WOFFINGTON, reciting from a part.

WOFFINGTON. "Now by the joys
Which my soul still has uncontroll'd pursued,
I would not turn aside from my least pleasure,
Though all thy force were armed to bar my way."

TRIPLET (*aside*). Mrs. Woffington, the great original of my picture!

WOFFINGTON. "But like the birds, great nature's happy
commoners
Rifle the sweets"—I beg your pardon, sir!

TRIPLET. Nay, madam, pray continue; happy the hearer and still happier the author of verses so spoken.

WOFFINGTON. Yes, if you could persuade the authors how much they owe us, and how hard it is to find good music for indifferent words. Are you an author, sir?

TRIPLET. In a small way, madam; I have here three tragedies.

WOFFINGTON (*looking down at them with comical horror*). Fifteen acts, mercy on us!

TRIPLET. Which if I could submit to Mrs. Woffington's judgment—

WOFFINGTON (*recoiling*). I am no judge of such things, sir.

TRIPLET. No more is the manager of this theatre.

WOFFINGTON. What! has he accepted them?

TRIPLET. No! madam! he has had them six months and returned them without a word.

WOFFINGTON. Patience, my good sir, patience! authors of tragedies should learn that virtue of their audiences. Do you know I called on Mr. Rich fifteen times before I could see him?

TRIPLET. You, madam, impossible!

WOFFINGTON. Oh, it was some years ago—and he has had to pay a hundred pounds for each of those little visits—let me see,—fifteen times—you must write twelve more tragedies—sixty acts—and then he will read one, and give you his judgment at last, and when you have got it—it won't be worth a farthing.

[*Turns up reading her part.*

TRIPLET (*aside*). One word from this laughing lady, and all my plays would be read—but I dare not ask her—she is up in the world, I am down. She is great—I am nobody—besides, they say she is all brains and no heart. (*Crosses, and moves sorrowfully away, taking his picture.*)

WOFFINGTON. He looks like a fifth act of a domestic tragedy. Stop, surely I know that doleful face—Sir!

TRIPLET. Madam!

WOFFINGTON (*beckons*). We have met before;—don't speak; yours is a face that has been kind to me, and I never forget those faces.

TRIPLET. Me, madam! I know better what is due to you than to be kind to you.

WOFFINGTON. To be sure! it is Mr. Triplet, good Mr. Triplet of Goodman's-fields Theatre.

TRIPLET. It is, madam (*opening his eyes with astonishment*); but we don't call him Mr., nor even good.

WOFFINGTON. Yes; it is Mr. Triplet (*shakes both his hands warmly; he timidly drops a tragedy or two*). Don't you remember a little orange girl at Goodman's Fields you used sometimes to pat on the head and give sixpence to, some seven years ago, Mr. Triplet?

TRIPLET. Ha! ha! I do remember one, with such a

merry laugh and bright eye; and the broadest brogue of the whole sisterhood.

WOFFINGTON. Get along with your blarney then, Mr. Triplet, an' is it the comether ye'd be puttin' on poor little Peggy?

TRIPLET. Oh! oh! gracious goodness, oh!

WOFFINGTON. Yes; that friendless orange girl was Margaret Woffington! Well, old friend, you see time has treated me well. I hope he has been as kind to you; tell me, Mr. Triplet.

TRIPLET (*aside*). I must put the best face on it with her. Yes, madam, he has blessed me with an excellent wife and three charming children. Mrs. Triplet was Mrs. Chatterton, of Goodman's Fields—great in the juvenile parts—you remember her?

WOFFINGTON (*very drily*). Yes, I remember her; where is she acting?

TRIPLET. Why, the cares of our family—and then her health (*sighs*). She has not acted these eight months.

WOFFINGTON. Ah!—and are you still painting scenes?

TRIPLET. With the pen, madam, not the brush! as the wags said, I have transferred the distemper from my canvas to my imagination, ha! ha!

WOFFINGTON (*aside*). This man is acting gaiety. And have your pieces been successful?

TRIPLET. Eminently so—in the closet; the managers have as yet excluded them from the stage.

WOFFINGTON. Ah! now if those things were comedies, I would offer to act in one of them, and then the stage door would fly open at sight of the author.

TRIPLET. I'll go home and write a comedy. (*Moves.*)

WOFFINGTON. On second thoughts, perhaps you had better leave the tragedies with me.

TRIPLET. My dear madam!—and you will read them?

WOFFINGTON. Ahem! I will make poor Rich read them.

TRIPLET. But he has rejected them.

WOFFINGTON. That is the first step—reading comes after, when it comes at all.

TRIPLET (*aside*). I must fly home and tell my wife.

WOFFINGTON (*aside*). In the mean time I can put five guineas into his pocket. Mr. Triplet, do you write congratulatory verses—odes—and that sort of thing?

TRIPLET. Anything, madam, from an acrostic to an epic.

WOFFINGTON. Good, then I have a commission for you; I dine to day at Mr. Vane's, in Bloomsbury Square.

We shall want some verses. Will you oblige us with a copy?

TRIPLET (*aside*). A guinea in my way, at least. Oh, madam, do but give me a subject.

WOFFINGTON. Let's see—myself, if you can write on such a theme.

TRIPLET. 'Tis the one I would have chosen out of all the heathen mythology; the praises of Venus and the Graces. I will set about it at once. (*Takes up portrait.*)

WOFFINGTON (*sees picture*). But what have you there? not another tragedy?

TRIPLET (*blushing*). A poor thing, madam, a portrait—my own painting, from memory.

WOFFINGTON. Oh! oh! I'm a judge of painted faces; let me see it.

TRIPLET. Nay, madam!

WOFFINGTON. I insist! (*She takes off the baize.*) My own portrait, as I live! and a good likeness too, or my glass flatters me like the rest of them. And this you painted from memory?

TRIPLET. Yes, madam; I have a free admission to every part of the theatre before the curtain. I have so enjoyed your acting, that I have carried your face home with me every night, forgive my presumption, and tried to fix in the studio the impression of the stage.

WOFFINGTON. Do you know your portrait has merit? I will give you a sitting for the last touches.

TRIPLET. Oh, madam!

WOFFINGTON. And bring all the critics—there, no thanks or I'll stay away. Stay, I must have your address.

TRIPLET (*returning to her*). On the fly leaf of each work, madam, you will find the address of James Triplet, painter, actor, and dramatic author, and Mrs. Woffington's humble and devoted servant. (*Bows ridiculously low, moves away, but returns with an attempt at a jaunty manner.*) Madam, you have inspired a son of Thespis with dreams of eloquence; you have tuned to a higher key a poet's lyre; you have tinged a painter's existence with brighter colours; and—and—(*gazes on her and tries in vain to speak*). God in heaven bless you, Mrs. Woffington! [*Exit hastily.*]

WOFFINGTON. So! I must look into this!

Enter SIR CHARLES POMANDER.

POMANDER. Ah, Mrs. Woffington, I have just parted with an adorer of yours.

WOFFINGTON. I wish I could part with them all.

POMANDER. Nay, this is a most original admirer, Ernest Vane, that pastoral youth who means to win La Woffington by agricultural courtship, who wants to take the star from its firmament, and stick it in a cottage.

WOFFINGTON. And what does the man think I am to do without this (*imitates applause*) from my dear public's thousand hands.

POMANDER. You are to have that from a single mouth instead. (*Mimics a kiss.*)

WOFFINGTON. Go on, tell me what more he says.

POMANDER. Why, he——

WOFFINGTON. No, you are not to invent; I should detect your work in a minute, and you would only spoil this man.

POMANDER. He proposes to be your friend, rather than your lover; to fight for your reputation instead of adding to your éclat.

WOFFINGTON. Oh! and is Mr. Vane your friend?

POMANDER. He is!

WOFFINGTON (*with significance*). Why don't you tell him my real character, and send him into the country again!

POMANDER. I do; but he snaps his fingers at me and common sense and the world:—there is no getting rid of him, except in one way. I had this morning the honour, madam, of laying certain propositions at your feet.

WOFFINGTON. Oh, yes, your letter, Sir Charles. (*Takes it out of her pocket.*) I ran my eye down it as I came along, let me see—(*letter*)—"a coach," "a country house," "pin-money." Heigh ho! And I am so tired of houses, and coaches, and pins. Oh, yes, here is something. What is this you offer me, up in this corner?

[*They inspect the letter together.*]

POMANDER. That,—my "heart!"

WOFFINGTON. And you can't even write it; it looks just like "earth." There is your letter, Sir Charles.

[*Curtseys and returns it; he takes it and bows.*]

POMANDER. Favour me with your answer.

WOFFINGTON. You have it.

POMANDER (*laughing*). Tell me, do you really refuse?

WOFFINGTON (*inspecting him*). Acting surprise? no, genuine! My good soul, are you so ignorant of the stage and the world, as not to know that I refuse such offers as yours every week of my life? I have refused so many of them, that I assure you I have begun to forget they are insults.

POMANDER. Insults, madam! They are the highest compliment you have left it in our power to pay you.

WOFFINGTON. Indeed! Oh, I take your meaning. To be your mistress could be but a temporary disgrace; to be your wife might be a lasting discredit. Now, sir, having played your rival's game——

POMANDER. Ah!

WOFFINGTON. And exposed your own hand, do something to recover the reputation of a man of the world. Leave the field before Mr. Vane can enjoy your discomfiture, for here he comes.

POMANDER. I leave you, madam, but remember, my discomfiture is neither your triumph nor your swain's.

[*Exit.*

WOFFINGTON. I do enjoy putting down these irresistibles.

Enter VANE.

At last! I have been here so long.

VANE. Alone?

WOFFINGTON. In company and solitude. What has annoyed you?

VANE. Nothing.

WOFFINGTON. Never try to conceal anything from me. I know the map of your face. These fourteen days you have been subject to some adverse influence; and to-day I have discovered whose it is.

VANE. No influence can ever shake yours.

WOFFINGTON. Dear friend, for your own sake, not mine; trust your own heart, eyes, and judgment.

VANE. I do. I love you; your face is the shrine of sincerity, truth, and candour. I alone know you: your flatterers do not—your detractors—oh! curse them!

WOFFINGTON. You see what men are! Have I done ill to hide the riches of my heart from the heartless, and keep them all for one honest man, who will be my friend, I hope, as well as my lover?

VANE. Ah, that is my ambition.

WOFFINGTON. We actresses make good the old proverb, "Many lovers, but few friends." And oh! it is we who need a friend. Will you be mine?

VANE. I will. Then tell me the way for me, unequal in wit and address to many of your admirers, to win your esteem.

WOFFINGTON. I will tell you a sure way; never act in my presence, never try to be very clever or eloquent. Remember! I am the goddess of tricks: I can only love

my superior. Be honest and frank as the day, and you will be my superior; and I shall love you, and bless the hour you shone on my artificial life.

VANE. Oh! thanks, thanks, for this, I trust, is in my power!

WOFFINGTON. Mind—it is no easy task: to be my friend is to respect me, that I may respect myself the more; to be my friend is to come between me and the temptations of an unprotected life—the recklessness of a vacant heart.

VANE. I will place all that is good about me at your feet. I will sympathize with you when you are sad; I will rejoice when you are gay.

WOFFINGTON. Will you scold me when I do wrong?

VANE. Scold you?

WOFFINGTON. Nobody scolds me now—a sure sign nobody loves me. Will you scold me?

VANE (*tenderly*). I will try! and I will be loyal and frank. You will not hate me for a confession I make myself? (*Agitated.*)

WOFFINGTON. I shall like you better—oh! so much better.

VANE. Then I will own to you —

WOFFINGTON. Oh! do not tell me you have loved others before me; I could not bear to hear it.

VANE. No—no—I never *loved* till now.

WOFFINGTON. Let me hear that only. I am jealous even of the past. Say you never loved but me—never mind whether it is true—say so;—but it is true, for you do not yet know love. Ernest, shall I make you love me, as none of your sex ever loved? with heart, and brain, and breath, and life, and soul?

VANE. Teach me so to love, and I am yours for ever. (*Pause.*) And now you will keep your promise, to make me happy with your presence this morning at the little festival I had arranged with Cibber and some of our friends of the theatre.

WOFFINGTON. I shall have so much pleasure; but, *àpropos*, you must include Snarl and Soaper in your list.

VANE. What! the redoubtable Aristarchuses of the pit?

WOFFINGTON. Yes. Oh, you don't know the consequences of loving an actress. You will have to espouse my quarrels, manage my managers, and invite my critics to dinner.

VANE. They shall be invited, never fear.

WOFFINGTON. And I've a trust for you; poor Triplet's three tragedies. If they are as heavy in the hearing as the carrying——But here comes your rival, poor Pomander. (*Crosses.*)

Enter SIR CHARLES.

You will join our party at Mr. Vane's, Sir Charles? You promised, you know. (*Crosses.*)

POMANDER (*coldly*). *Désolé* to forfeit such felicity; but I have business.

VANE (*as he passes, crosses*). By-the-bye, Pomander, that answer to your letter to Mrs. Woffington?

WOFFINGTON. He has received it. *N'est-ce pas*, Sir Charles? You see how radiant it has made him! Ha! ha!

[*Exeunt WOFFINGTON and VANE.*

POMANDER. Laughing devil! If you had wit to read beneath men's surface, you would know it is no jest to make an enemy of Sir Charles Pomander.

Enter HUNSDON.

HUNSDON. Servant, Sir Charles.

POMANDER. Ah, my yeoman pricker, with news of the mysterious Hebe of my Barnet rencontre. Well, sirrah, you stayed by the coach as I bade you?

HUNSDON. Yes, Sir Charles.

POMANDER. And pumped the servants?

HUNSDON. Yes, Sir Charles, till they swore they'd pump on me.

POMANDER. My good fellow, contrive to answer my questions without punning, will you?

HUNSDON. Yes, Sir Charles.

POMANDER. What did you learn from them? Who is the lady, their mistress?

HUNSDON. She is on her way to town to join her husband. They have only been married a twelvemonth; and he has been absent from her half the time.

POMANDER. Good. Her name?

HUNSDON. Vane.

POMANDER. Vane!

HUNSDON. Wife of Mr. Ernest Vane, a gentleman of good estate, Willoughby Manor, Huntingdonshire.

POMANDER. What!—What!—His wife, by heaven! Oh! here is a rare revenge. Ride back, sirrah, and follow the coach to its destination.

HUNSDON. They took master for a highwayman. If they knew him as well as I do, they would n't do the road such an injustice. [*Exit.*

POMANDER (*with energy*). I'll after them; and if I can but manage that Vane shall remain ignorant of her arrival, I may confront Hebe with Thalia; introduce the wife to the mistress under the husband's roof. Aha! my Arcadian pair, there may be a guest at your banquet you little expect, besides Sir Charles Pomander! [*Exit.*]

SCENE II.

A spacious and elegant Apartment in the House of MR. VANE, opening into a Garden formally planted, with Statues, &c. A Table set for a collation, with Fruits, Flowers, Wine, and Plate. A Door in flat, communicating with Entrance Hall; other Doors. Settees and high-backed Chairs, a Side Table with Plate, Salvers, &c.

COLANDER *discovered* arranging table.

COLANDER. So! malmsey, fruit, tea, coffee, yes! all is ready against their leaving the dining-room!

Enter JAMES BURDOCK, *a salver with letters in his hand.*

BURDOCK. Post letters, Master Colander.

COLANDER. Put 'em on the salver. (BURDOCK *does so.*) You may go, honest Burdock—(BURDOCK *fidgets, turning the letters on the salver*) when I say you *may* go—that means you *must*; the stable is your place when the family is not in Huntingdonshire, and at present the family is in London.

BURDOCK. And I wish it was in Huntingdonshire, with the best part of it, and that's mistress. Poor thing! A twelvemonth married, and six months of it as good as a widow.

COLANDER. We write to her, James, and receive her replies.

BURDOCK. Aye! but we don't read 'em, it seems.

COLANDER. We intend to do so at our leisure—meanwhile we make ourselves happy among the wits and the players.

BURDOCK. And she do make others happy among the poor and the suffering.

COLANDER. James Burdock, property has its duties, as well as its rights. Master enjoys the rights in town, and mistress discharges the duties in the country; 't is the division of labour—and now vanish, honest James,

the company will be here directly, and you know master can't abide the smell of the stable. (*Crosses.*)

BURDOCK. But, Master Colander, do let him have this letter from missus. (*Holds out the letter he has taken from the salver.*)

COLANDER. James Burdock, you are incorrigible. Have I not given it to him once already? and did n't he fling it in my face and call me a puppy? I respect Mistress Vane, James; but I must remember what's due to myself—I shan't take it. [*Exit.*]

BURDOCK. Then I will—there! Poor dear lady! I can't abear that her letters, with her heart in 'em, I'll be sworn, should lie unopened. Barnet post mark!—why, how can that be? Well, it's not my business. (*Puts salver on table.*) Master shall have it though. (*Hurried knocking heard.*) There goes that door, ah! I thought it would n't be quiet long—what a rake-helly place this London is! [*Exit.*]

Re-enter with MRS. VANE in a hood and travelling-dress.

BURDOCK. Stop! stop! I don't think master can see you, young woman.

MABEL. Why, James Burdock, have you forgotten your mistress? (*Removes her hood.*)

BURDOCK. Mistress! why Miss Mabel—I ask your pardon, miss,—I mean, madam. Bless your sweet face!—here, John, Thomas!

MABEL. Hush!

BURDOCK. Lord, lord! come at last! oh! how woundy glad I am, to be sure—oh! lord, lord, my old head's all of a muddle with joy to see your kind face again.

MABEL. But Ernest—Mr. Vane, James, is he well—and happy—and (*sees his change of face*)—Eh! he is well, James?

BURDOCK. Yes, yes, quite well, and main happy.

MABEL. And is he very impatient to see me?

BURDOCK (*aside*). Lord help her!

MABEL. But mind, James, not a word; he does n't expect me till six, and 't is now scarce four. Oh! I shall startle him so!

BURDOCK. Yes, yes, madam; you'll startle him woundily.

MABEL. Oh! it will be so delightful to pop out upon him unawares—will it not, James?

BURDOCK. Yes, Miss Mabel,—that is, madam; but had n't I better prepare him like?

MABEL. Not for the world. You know, James, when

one is wishing for any one very much, the last hour's waiting is always the most intolerable, so when he is most longing to see me, and counting the minutes to six, I'll just open the door, and steal behind him, and fling my arms round his neck, and—but I shall be caught if I stay prattling here, and I must brush the dust from my hair, and smooth my dress, or I shall not be fit to be seen; so not a word to anybody, James, I insist, or I shall be angry. Where is my room? (*Goes and opens door.*) Oh, here!

BURDOCK. Your room, Miss Mabel; no! no! that is Mr. Vane's room, Ma'am.

MABEL. Well, Mr. Vane's room is my room, I suppose. (*Pausing at door.*) He is not there, is he?

BURDOCK. No, Ma'am, he is in the dining-room. (*Knock.*) Anon! anon!

MABEL. I fear my trunks will not be here in time for me to dress; but Ernest will not mind. He will see my heart in my face, and forgive my travelling sacque.

[*Exit into apartment.*]

BURDOCK. Poor thing! poor thing! (*Knock.*) There goes that door again—darn me if I go till I've seen Colander. Anon,—Miss Mabel!—(*Going to door.*)

HUNSDON enters.

HUNSDON (*aside and looking at BURDOCK*). For all the world the twin brother to those bumpkins behind Hebe's coach. Well, my honest fellow!

BURDOCK. Well, my jack-a-dandy!

HUNSDON. Can't bring me Sir Charles Pomander hither, my honest fellow?

BURDOCK. Here he's a bringing himself, my jack-a-dandy. [*Exit.*]

HUNSDON. For so pretty a creature, she hath an establishment of the veriest brutes. Ah! here comes Master!

Enter SIR CHARLES POMANDER.

POMANDER. Well! is she arrived?

HUNSDON (*aside to POMANDER*). I've marked her down, sir. She is here—in that room.

POMANDER. Is her arrival known?

HUNSDON. But to a rustic savage of a servant.

POMANDER. Good! Take thy sheep's face out of sight, incontinently.

HUNSDON. Yes, Sir Charles.

POMANDER. Hold! I have kept thee sober for two days. Here's for thee to make a beast of thyself.

HUNSDON. Nay, I'll disappoint him, and profit by sobriety. [*Exit.*]

POMANDER. So, the train is laid and I hold the match in my hand.

[COLANDER returns with Servants, who bring tea, coffee, &c.]

Enter VANE, WOFFINGTON, QUIN, CLIVE, CIBBER, SNARL and SOAPER, as from the dining-room, laughing.

QUIN. I hate this detestable innovation of outlandish drawing-room drinks—your tea and coffee—pshaw!

VANE. But you forget the ladies, Mr. Quin, and in the presence of Mr. Cibber too, whom I cannot thank enough for the honor of this visit.

CIBBER. Nay, sir, I bring my wit in exchange for your wine; we barter our respective superfluities.

QUIN. Good wine is no superfluity, Mr. Cibber; 't is a necessary of life, just as much as good victuals.

SOAPER. I vow Mr. Cibber is as lively as ever, and does n't look a day older: does he, Mr. Snarl?

SNARL. 'T is that there's no room on Mr. Cibber's face for another wrinkle.

CIBBER (*takes snuff.*) Puppies!

QUIN. Really this is too bad, the coffee is getting cold. (*Goes to table.*)

CLIVE. So, no wonder Quin is getting warm. (*Gives him coffee.*) Here, bear! [*WOFFINGTON presides over tea.*]

CIBBER. You have a charming house here, Mr. Vane, I knew it in poor dear Lord Loungeville's time. You may just remember him, Sir Charles?

POMANDER. I never read ancient history.

CIBBER. Puppy! An unrivalled gallant, Peggy. Oh, the *petits soupers* we have had here! Loungeville was a great creature, Sir Charles. I wish you may ever be like him.

POMANDER. I sincerely trust not. (*Goes to table.*) I do not feel at all anxious to figure in the museum of town antiquities—labelled, "Old Beau, very curious."

CIBBER (*aside*). Coxcomb! Let me tell you your old beaux were the only ones worthy of winging the shafts from Cupid's quiver.

SNARL. Witness Mr. Cibber. (*Goes to table.*)

WOFFINGTON. Oh, Colley is like old port—the more ancient he grows the more exquisite his perfume becomes.

SOAPER. Capital! She alludes to Mr. Cibber's pulvilio.

SNARL. And the crustier he gets.

SOAPER. Delicious! He alludes to Mr. Cibber's little irritability.

CIBBER. Ah, laugh at us old fellows as you will, young people; but I have known Loungeville entertain a fine lady in this very saloon, whilst a rival was fretting and fuming on the other side of that door. Ha, ha! (*Sighs.*) It is all over now.

POMANDER. Nay, Mr. Cibber, why assume that the house has lost its virtue in our friend's hands?

CIBBER. Because, young gentleman, you all want *sçavoir faire*; the fellows of the day are all either unprincipled heathens like you, or cold blooded Amadisses like our host. The true *Preux des Dames* (*regretfully*), went out with the full periwig, stap my vitals!

QUIN. A bit of toast, Mr. Cibber? (*Goes to table.*)

CIBBER. Jemmy, you are a brute.

QUIN. You refuse, Sir?

CIBBER (*with dignity*). No, Sir, I accept.

[QUIN takes plate of toast to table.]

POMANDER (*goes to table*). You Antediluvians must not flatter yourselves you have monopolized iniquity, or that the deluge washed away intrigue, and that a rake is a fossil. We are still as vicious as you could desire, Mr. Cibber. What if I bet a cool hundred round that Vane has a petticoat in the next room, and Mrs. Woffington shall bring her out.

VANE. Pomander! (*checks himself*) but we all know Pomander.

POMANDER. Not yet, *but you shall*. Now don't look so abominably innocent, my dear fellow, I ran her to earth in this house not ten minutes ago.

CIBBER. Have her out, Peggy! I know the run—there's the cover—Hark forward! Yoicks! Ha, ha, ha! (*Coughing.*) Ho, ho!

VANE. Mr. Cibber, age and infirmity are privileged; but for you, Sir Charles Pomander—

WOFFINGTON. Don't be angry. Do you not see it is a jest, and, as might be expected, a sorry one?

VANE. A jest; it must go no farther, or by Heaven!—

[WOFFINGTON places her hand on his shoulder.—

MABEL appears.

MABEL. Ernest, dear Ernest!

[WOFFINGTON removes her hand quickly.]

VANE. Mabel!

POMANDER. I win. (*A pause of silent amazement.*)

[VANE looks round on the reverse side from WOFFINGTON.

WOFFINGTON (*aside to VANE*). Who is this?

VANE. My—my wife!

[*All rise and bow. COLANDER places chair for MRS. VANE.*

CIBBER. 'Fore Gad! he is stronger than Loungeville.

MABEL. You are not angry with me for this silly trick? After all I am but two hours before my time. You know, dearest, I said six in my letter.

VANE. Yes—yes!

MABEL. And you have had three days to prepare you, for I wrote like a good wife to ask leave before starting, ladies and gentlemen; but he never so much as answered my letter, madam. (*To WOFFINGTON, who winces.*)

VANE. Why, you c—c—could n't doubt, Mabel?

[CIBBER joins SNARL and SOAPER at table.

MABEL. No, silence gives consent; but I beg your pardon, ladies (*looking to WOFFINGTON*), for being so glad to see my husband.

SNARL. 'Tis a failing, madam, you will soon get over in town. (*Laugh.*)

MABEL. Nay, sir, I hope not; but I warrant me you did not look for me so soon.

WOFFINGTON. Some of us did not look for you at all.

MABEL. What! Ernest did not tell you he expected me?

WOFFINGTON. No; he told us the entertainment was in honor of a lady's first visit to his house; but he did *not* tell us that lady was his wife.

VANE (*aside to WOFFINGTON*). Spare her!

WOFFINGTON (*aside to VANE*). Have you spared me?

POMANDER. No doubt he wished to procure us that agreeable surprise, which you have procured him.

SNARL. And which he evidently enjoys so much.

SOAPER. Oh, evidently.

[CIBBER, SNARL, and SOAPER laugh, aside.

VANE. You had better retire, Mabel, and change your travelling dress.

MABEL. Nay; you forget, I am a stranger to your friends. Will you not introduce me to them first?

VANE. No, no; it is not usual to introduce in the polite world.

WOFFINGTON. We always introduce ourselves (*rises*).

[*All come down except VANE and QUIN.*

VANE (*aside to WOFFINGTON*). Madam, for pity's sake!

WOFFINGTON. So, if you will permit me.

POMANDER (*aside*). Now for the explosion!

VANE (*aside*). She will shew me no mercy.

WOFFINGTON (*introducing CLIVE*). Lady Lurewell!

CLIVE. Madam! (*She curtsies.*) If she had made me a commoner, I'd have exposed her on the spot.

WOFFINGTON (*introducing him*). Sir John Brute!

QUIN (*she comes forward, aside to WOFFINGTON*). Hang it! Falstaff!

WOFFINGTON. Sir John Brute Falstaff! we call him for brevity, Brute.

POMANDER (*aside*). Missed fire! Confound her ready wit.

VANE (*aside*). I breathe again.

WOFFINGTON. That is Lord Foppington (*crosses to CIBBER*), a butterfly of long standing and a little gouty. Sir Charles Pomander!

POMANDER. Who will spare you the trouble of a description (*crossing to MABEL*), as he has already had the honour of avowing himself Mrs. Vane's most humble servant.

VANE. How? (*Advances.*)

MABEL. The good gentleman who helped my coach out of the slough yesterday.

VANE. Ah! (*Goes up to the table.*)

WOFFINGTON. Mr. Soaper, Mr. Snarl—gentlemen who would butter and cut up their own fathers!

MABEL. Bless me; cannibals!

WOFFINGTON (*with a sweet smile*). No; critics.

MABEL. But yourself, madam?

WOFFINGTON (*curtseying*). I am the Lady Betty Modish, at your service.

CLIVE (*aside to QUIN*). And anybody else's.

MABEL. Oh dear, so many lords and ladies!

VANE. Pray go, and change your dress, Mabel.

MABEL. What! before you hear the news of dear Willoughby, Ernest? Lady Betty, I had so many things to tell him, and he sends me away.

CIBBER. Nay, really, 't is too cruel.

WOFFINGTON. Pray, madam, your budget of country news: clotted cream so seldom comes to London quite fresh.

MABEL. There you see, Ernest. First, then, Grey Gillian is turned out for a brood mare, so old George won't let me ride her.

WOFFINGTON. The barbarian!

MABEL. Old servants are such hard masters, my lady; and my Barbary hen has laid two eggs, Ernest. Heaven knows the trouble we have had to bring her to it. And dame Best (that's his old nurse, Lady Lurewell) has had soup and pudding from the hall every day.

QUIN. Soup and pudding! that's what I call true charity.

MABEL. Yes; and once she went so far as to say, "it was n't altogether a bad pudding." I made it with these hands.

CIBBER. Happy pudding!

VANE. Is it mockery, sir?

CIBBER. No, sir, it is gallantry; an exercise that died before you were born. Madam, shall I have the honour of kissing one of the fair hands that made that most favoured of puddings?

MABEL. Oh, my Lord, you may, because you are so old; but I don't say so for a young gentleman, unless it was Ernest himself, and he does n't ask me.

[CIBBER, SNARL, and SOAPER, go up.

VANE (*angrily*). My dear Mabel, pray remember we are not at Willoughby.

CLIVE. Now, bear, where's your paw? (*Going up.*)

QUIN. All I regret is, that I go without having helped Mrs. Vane to buttered toast.

CLIVE. Poor Quin, first to quit his bottle half finished, and now, to leave the run of the table for a walk in the garden! [*Exeunt.*]

VANE. Let me shew you to your apartment. (*Rings bell, leads her to door.*)

Enter Servant.

Bid the musicians play. [*Exit Servant.*]

(VANE offers his arm to WOFFINGTON.) Let me conduct you to the garden.

[*Music.* WOFFINGTON gives her hand and goes off with VANE: in going out she looks back.

WOFFINGTON (*aside*). Yes; there are triumphs out of the theatre. [*Exit with VANE.*]

CIBBER (*crosses to MABEL*). Mr. Vane's garden will lack its fairest flower, madam, if you desert us.

MABEL. Nay, my Lord, there are fairer here than I.

POMANDER (*goes up*). Jealous, I see, already. Shall I tell her all? No; I will let the green-eyed monster

breach the fortress, and then I shall walk in without a contest.

CIBBER (*meeting* SIR CHARLES). Your arm, Sir Charles.

POMANDER. At your service, Mr. Cibber.

[*Exeunt* POMANDER and CIBBER.]

SNARL. A pleasant party, Mr. Soaper.

SOAPER. Remarkably. Such a delightful meeting of husband and wife, Mr. Snarl!

[*Exeunt.*]
[*Music ceases.*]

MABEL. How kind they all are to me, except him whose kindness alone I value, and he must take Lady Betty's hand instead of mine; but that is good breeding I suppose. I wish there was no such thing as good breeding in London, any more than in Huntingdonshire.

COLANDER (*without, angrily*). I tell you Mr. Vane is not at home.

MABEL. What is the matter?

[*TRIPLET discovered attempting to force his way through. COLANDER bars his entrance. TRIPLET carries a portfolio, two volumes, and a roll of manuscript.*]

COLANDER. I tell you he is not at home, sir.

MABEL. How can you say so, when you know he is in the garden.

COLANDER. Ugh! (*aside*) the simpleton.

MABEL. Show the gentleman in.

COLANDER. Gentleman!

TRIPLET. A thousand thanks, madam, for this condescension; I will wait Mr. Vane's leisure in the hall.

MABEL. Nay, sir, not in the hall, 't is cold there. Tell Mr. Vane the gentleman waits. Will you go, sirrah?

COLANDER. I am gone, madam. (*Aside.*) Porter to players! and now usher to an author! curse me if I stand it.

[*Exit.*]
TRIPLET (*advancing*). A thousand apologies, madam, for the trouble I put you to. I—madam—you overwhelm me with confusion.

MABEL. Nay—nay—be seated.

TRIPLET. Madam, you are too condescending. (*Aside.*) Who can she be? (*Bows again and again.*)

MABEL. Nay, sit down and rest you. (*TRIPLET bows, and sits on the edge of a chair, with astonishment.*) You look sadly adust and tired.

TRIPLET. Why, yes, madam; it is a long way from Lambeth; and the heat is surpassing. (*Takes his handkerchief out to wipe his brow: returns it somewhat*

hastily to his pocket). I beg your pardon, I forgot myself.

MABEL (*aside*). Poor man, he looks sadly lean and hungry. And I'll be bound you came in such a hurry, you forgot—you must n't be angry with me—to have your dinner first.

TRIPLET. How strange! Madam, you have guessed it. I did forget—he, he!—I have such a head—not that I need have forgotten it—but being used to forget it, I did not remember not to forget it to-day (*smiles absurdly*).

MABEL (*pours wine*). A glass of wine, sir?

TRIPLET (*rising and bowing*). Nay, madam (*eyes the wine—drinks*). Nectar, as I am a man. (*She helps him to refreshments.*)

MABEL. Take a biscuit, sir?

TRIPLET (*eating*). Madam, as I said before, you overwhelm me. Walking certainly makes one hungry (*eats*). Oh, yes, it certainly does (*MABEL helps him*); and though I do not usually eat at this time of the day—(*MABEL helps him again.*)

MABEL. I am sorry Mr. Vane keeps you waiting.

TRIPLET. By no means, Madam, it is very fortunate (*eats*)—I mean it procures me the pleasure of (*eats*) your society. Besides, the servants of the Muse are used to waiting. What we are not used to is (*she fills his glass*) being waited on by Hebe and the Twelve Graces, whose health I have the honour!—Falernian, as I'm a poet!

MABEL. A poet! (*Clapping her hands.*) Oh, I am so glad! I never thought to see a living poet; I do so love poetry!

TRIPLET. Ha! it is in your face, madam. I should be proud to have your opinion of this trifle composed by me for Mr. Vane, in honour of the lady he expected this morning.

MABEL (*aside*). Dear Ernest! how ungrateful I was. Nay, sir, I think I know the lady; and it would be hardly proper for me to hear them.

TRIPLET (*after placing the MS. by the side of his plate, with another plate to keep it open; laying his hand on his heart*). Oh, strictly correct, Madam. James Triplet never stooped to the loose taste of the town, even in trifles of this sort. (*Reads.*) “When first from Albion's isle——”

MABEL. Take another glass of wine first.

TRIPLET. Madam, I will (*drinks*). I thank you infinitely. (*Reads.*) “When first from Albion's isle——”

MABEL. Another biscuit (*helps him*).

TRIPLET. Madam (*eats a mouthful*), you do me infinite honour. (*Reads again*.) "When first from Albion's isle——"

MABEL. No—no—no! (*Stops her ears*.) Mr. Vane intended them for a surprise, and it would spoil his pleasure were I to hear them from you.

TRIPLET (*sighs*). As you please, madam! But you would have liked them, for the theme inspired me. The kindest, the most generous and gifted of women!—don't you agree with me, madam?

MABEL (*laughs*). No, indeed!

TRIPLET. Ah! if you knew her as I do.

MABEL. I ought to know her better, sir.

TRIPLET. Her kindness to me, for instance: a poor devil like me, if I may be allowed the expression.

MABEL. Nay, you exaggerate her trifling act of civility.

TRIPLET (*reproachfully*). Act of civility, madam! Why she has saved me from despair—from starvation perhaps.

MABEL (*aside*). Poor thing! how hungry he must have been.

TRIPLET. And she's to sit to me for her portrait, too.

MABEL. Her portrait! (*Aside*.) Oh, another attention of Ernest's—but I thought you were a poet, sir?

TRIPLET. So I am, madam, from an epitaph to an epic. Let me convince you. (*Reads*.) "When first from Albion's isle——"

MABEL. But you spoke just now of painting. Are you a painter too?

TRIPLET. From a scene to a sign-board; from a house-front to an historical composition.

MABEL. Oh, what a clever man! And so Ernest commissioned you to paint this portrait?

TRIPLET. No; for that I am indebted to the lady herself.

MABEL. The lady? (*Rises*.)

TRIPLET. I expected to find her here;—perhaps you can inform me whether she is arrived?

MABEL (*aside*). Not my portrait after all. Who?

TRIPLET. Mrs. Woffington.

MABEL. Woffington? No, there was no such name among the guests Mr. Vane received to-day.

TRIPLET. That is strange! She was to be here; and therefore I expedited the verses in her honour.

MABEL (*ruefully*). In *her* honour?

TRIPLET. Yes, Madam: the subject is "Genius trampling on Envy." It begins — (*reads*). "When first from Albion's Isle——"

MABEL. Nay, I do not care to hear them, for I do not know the lady.

TRIPLET. Few really know her; but at least you have seen her act.

MABEL. Act! Is she an actress?

TRIPLET. *An* actress, madam! *The* Actress!—and you have never seen her! Madam, you have a great pleasure before you; to see her act is a privilege, but to act with her, as I once did, though she does n't remember it—I was hissed, madam, owing to circumstances which for the credit of our common nature I suppress.

MABEL. An actor too!

TRIPLET. And it was in a farce of my own too, madam, which was damned—accidentally.

MABEL. And a play-writer?

TRIPLET. Plays, madam! I have written a library of them; but the madmen who manage the patent houses won't act them and make their fortunes. You see in me a dramatic gold mine, lost because no company will work me.

MABEL. Yes, yes; but tell me! this actress:—Mr. Vane admires her?

TRIPLET. Mr. Vane is a gentleman of taste, madam.

MABEL. And she was to have been here? There were none but persons of quality—Ah! the news of my intended arrival—no doubt—well Mr.——

TRIPLET. Triplet, madam! James Triplet, 10, Hercules Buildings, Lambeth: occasional verses, odes, epithalamia, elegies, dedications, translations, and every species of literary composition executed with spirit, punctuality, and secrecy. Portraits painted, and lessons given in declamation and the dramatic art. The card, madam, (*presents card*) of him, who, to all these qualifications adds a prouder still—that of being your humble, devoted, and truly grateful servant—James Triplet (*bows and moves off,—returns*). The fact is, madam, it may appear strange to you, but a kind hand has not so often been held out to me, that I should forget it, especially when that hand is so fair and gracious as yours. May I be permitted, madam? (*puts her hand to his lips*), you will impute it to gratitude rather than audacity—madam, I am gone—I flatter myself James Triplet, throughout this charming

interview, has conducted himself like what he may not appear to be—a gentleman.—Madam, I take my final leave.

[*Exit.*

MABLE. Invite an actress to his house! but Ernest is so warm-hearted and generous; no doubt 'tis as Mr. Triplet says; he has admired her acting and wished to mark his sense of her merit by presenting her these verses, and a dinner.

[*Music.*

These poor actors and actresses! I have seen some of them down in Huntingdonshire, and I know what a kindness it is to give them a good meal. (*Crosses.*)

Enter SIR CHARLES POMANDER.

POMANDER. What, madam, all alone, here as in Huntingdonshire! Force of habit. A husband with a wife in Huntingdonshire is so like a bachelor.

MABEL. Sir!

POMANDER. And our excellent Ernest is such a favourite.

MABEL. No wonder.

POMANDER. There are not many who can so pass in six months from the larva state of Bumpkin to the butterfly existence of Beau.

[*Music ceases.*

MABEL. Yes; (*sadly*) I find him changed.

POMANDER. Changed? transformed! He is now the prop of the Cocoa-tree—the star of Ranelagh—the Lauzun of the Green Room.

MABEL. The green room?

POMANDER. Ah, I forgot! you are fresh from Eden; the Green Room, my dear madam, is the bower where fairies put off their wings and goddesses become dowdies—where Lady Macbeth weeps over her lap-dog's indigestion, and Belvidera groans over the amount of her last milliner's bill. In a word, the Green Room is the place where actors and actresses become mere men and women, and the name is no doubt derived from the general character of its unprofessional visitors.

MABEL. And is it possible that Ernest, Mr. Vane, frequents such places?

POMANDER. He has earned in six months a reputation that many a fine gentleman would give his ears for—not a scandalous journal he has not figured in—not an actress of reputation or no reputation, but gossip has given him for a conquest.

MABEL. You forget, sir, you are speaking to his wife.

POMANDER. On the contrary, madam; but you would

be sure to learn this, and it is best you should learn it at once and from a friend.

MABEL. Is it the office of a friend to calumniate the husband to the wife?

POMANDER. When he admires the wife, he reprobates the husband's ill-taste in neglecting her.

MABEL. Do you suppose I did not know of his having invited Mrs. Woffington to his house to-day?

POMANDER. What! you found her out? you detected the Actress-of-all-work under the airs of Lady Betty Modish?

MABEL. Lady Betty Modish!

POMANDER. Yes; that was La Woffington.

MABEL. Whom he had invited hither to present her with a copy of verses.

POMANDER. Et cetera.

MABEL. And who in an actress's sudden frolic, gave herself and her companions those titles without my husband's connivance.

POMANDER. Vane could not have explained it half so well. These women are incredibles.

MABEL. Had the visit been in any other character, do you think he would have chosen for it the day of my arrival?

POMANDER. Certainly not, if he knew you were coming.

MABEL. And he did know; why here (*seeing letters on table*) are my letters announcing my intention to start—my progress on the road—the last written from Barnet, only yesterday.

[*While speaking she has gone to the salver, and hastily taken the letters, which she offers POMANDER with triumph. He takes them with an uncertain air, looks at them—gives them back to her—after a pause—*

POMANDER (*coolly*). The seals have not been broken, Madam.

MABEL (*bursting into tears*). Unopened! It is too true! Flung aside unread! and I have learned by heart every word he ever wrote to me. Sir, you have struck down the hope and trust of my life without remorse. May heaven forgive you!

POMANDER. Madam! let me, who have learned to adore you—

MABEL. I may no longer hold a place in my husband's heart—but I am still mistress of his house—leave it, Sir!

POMANDER. Your wishes are my law (*going*), — but here they come! (*Crosses.*) Use the right of a wife, watch them unseen, and you will soon learn whether I am mistaken, or you misinformed.

MABEL (*violently*). No! I will not dog my husband's steps at the bidding of his treacherous friend (*watches POMANDER out*).

POMANDER (*aside*). She will watch them. [*Exit.*
[*After a moment or two of irresolution, MABEL crouches down behind a chair. Enter VANE conducting WOFFINGTON: they pass without observing MABEL.*

VANE. But one word — I can explain all. Let me accompany you to this painter's. I am ready to renounce credit — character — wife — all for you!

WOFFINGTON. I go alone, sir. Call Mrs. Woffington's coach. [*Exit WOFFINGTON followed by VANE.*

MABEL (*starting from seat*). Oh, no, no! — you cannot use me so. Ernest! Husband! (*tries to rush towards him. Swoons. VANE returns.*)

VANE. Who called me? Mabel — my wife! (*stamps*) help, here! — what have I done? (*He raises her in his arms.*)

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE.—A large roughly furnished Garret. EASEL with WOFFINGTON'S Picture on it, half concealed by a green baize Drapery. Colours, Palette, Pencils, Maulstick, &c. &c. MRS. TRIPLET reclining in a large chair, and wrapped up like an invalid. Violin hanging against wall. TRIPLET seated at small Table writing. Two Children. Wooden Chairs. Boy is rocking Cradle and singing.

TRIPLET. Do keep those children quiet, Jane.

MRS. TRIPLET. Hush, my dears, let your father write his comedy. Comedy seems so troublesome to write.

TRIPLET. Yes! somehow sorrow comes more natural to me! (*Pause.*) I've got a bright thought; you see,

Jane, they are all at a sumptuous banquet: all the Dramatis Personæ except the poet, (*writes*) music—sparkling wine—massive plate—soups—fish—shall I have three dishes of fish? venison—game—pickles and provocatives in the centre, then up jumps one of the guests, and says he——

BOY. Oh, dear! I am so hungry!

GIRL. And so am I.

TRIPLET. That is an absurd remark, Lysimachus, not four hours after breakfast.

BOY. But father—there was n't any breakfast for breakfast!

TRIPLET. Now I ask you, Mrs. Triplet—how am I to write comic scenes, if you let Lysimachus and Roxalana there put the heavy business in every five minutes?

MRS. TRIPLET. Forgive them, the poor things *are* hungry!

TRIPLET. Then they must learn to be hungry in another room. They shan't cling round my pen and paralyze it, just when it is going to make all our fortunes (*rises*); but you women have no consideration—send 'em all to bed, every man Jack of 'em (*Children raise a doleful cry*). Hungry! hungry! Is that a proper expression to use before a father who is sitting down (*seats himself*), all gaiety—and hilarity to write a Com—a Com—(*chokes*)? Where 's the youngest—where 's Cleopatra? (MRS. TRIPLET brings Child to him—he takes her on his knee.)

GIRL. Father, I'm not so very hungry!

BOY (*who has come to his Father*). And I'm not hungry at all—I had a piece of bread and butter yesterday!

TRIPLET. Wife; they'll drive me mad!

BOY (*sotto voce*). Mother; father made us hungry out of his book.

GIRL. Is it a cookery book, father?

TRIPLET. Ha! ha! is my comedy a cookery book? The young rogues say more good things than I do—that is the worst of it. Wife, I took that sermon I wrote——

MRS. TRIPLET. And beautiful it was, James.

TRIPLET. I took it to the Reverend Gentleman, and he would not have it, he said it was too hard upon sin for the present day (*dashes at the paper*). Ah! if my friend Mrs. Woffington would but leave this stupid comedy and take to tragedy, things would smile again.

MRS. TRIPLET. Oh, James, how can you expect anything from that woman? You won't believe what all

the world says—you measure folk by your own good heart.

TRIPLET. I have n't a good heart, I spoke like a brute to you just now.

MRS. TRIPLET. Never mind, James, I wonder how you put up with me at all! a sick useless creature. I often wish to die, for your sake—I know you would do better—I am such a weight round your neck. (TRIPLET takes MRS. TRIPLET to chair—then returns with energy to his comedy—Boy brings violin.)

BOY. Play us a tune on the fiddle, father!

MRS. TRIPLET. Ay do, husband! that often helps you in your writing. (TRIPLET plays a merry tune dolefully.)

TRIPLET. It won't do, music must be in the heart, or it will never come out of the fingers (*puts fiddle down*—Boy takes it and puts it in the cradle). No! let us be serious and finish the comedy—perhaps it hitches because I forgot to invoke Thalia—the Muse of Comedy, Mrs. Triplet; she must be a black-hearted jade if she won't lend a broad grin to a poor devil starving in the middle of his hungry little ones.

MRS. TRIPLET. Heathen goddesses can't help us. We had better pray to heaven to look down on us and our children.

TRIPLET (*sullenly*). You forget, Mrs. Triplet, that our street is very narrow, and the opposite houses are very high.

MRS. TRIPLET. James!

TRIPLET. How can heaven see an honest man and his family in such an out-of-the-way place as this.

MRS. TRIPLET. Oh! what words are these?

TRIPLET. Have we given honesty a fair trial? yes or no (*walking in great agitation*)!

MRS. TRIPLET. No, not till we die as we have lived.

TRIPLET. I suppose heaven is just, I can't know it, till it sends me an angel to take my children's part; they cry to me for bread, I have nothing to give them but hard words. God knows it has taken a great deal to break my heart, but it is broken at last, broken—broken—(*he sobs with head on his hands on table*).

Enter WOFFINGTON speaking.

WOFFINGTON. Was n't somebody inquiring after an angel? Here I am!

TRIPLET. Mrs. Woffington!

[MRS. WOFFINGTON *seeing* TRIPLET's distress, *retreats*; but *presently comes back*.

WOFFINGTON. See (*shows him letter*). "Madam, you are an angel;" from a gentleman, a perfect stranger to me, so it must be correct.

Enter POMPEY with a basket.

Ah! here is another angel! there are two sorts you know, angels of light and angels of darkness (*takes basket from POMPEY*). Lucifer, avaunt! (*in a terrible tone*) and wait outside the door, (*in a familiar tone*). [*Exit POMPEY.* (*Aside.* They are in sore distress, poor things!) I am sorry you are ill, Mrs. Triplet! I have brought you some physic—black draught from Burgundy. (MRS. TRIPLET *attempts to rise, but sinks back again*). Don't move, I insist!

TRIPLET. Oh, Mrs. Woffington, had I dreamed you would deign to come here, —

WOFFINGTON. You would have taken care to be out. (*Aside.*) Their faces look pinched, I know what that means. Mrs. Triplet, I have come to give your husband a sitting for my portrait, will you allow me to eat my little luncheon in your room? I am so hungry. Pompey! (*POMPEY runs in*) run to the corner and buy me that pie I took such a fancy to as we came along (*gives money to POMPEY*). [*Exit POMPEY.*

BOY. Mother, will the lady give me a bit of her pie?

MRS. TRIPLET. Hush, you rude boy!

WOFFINGTON. She is not much of a lady if she does n't! Now, children, we'll first look at father's comedy. Nineteen dramatis personæ,—cut out seven. Don't bring your armies into *our* drawing-rooms, Mr. Dagger and Bowl: can you marshal battalions on a Turkey carpet, and make gentlefolks witty in platoons? What's here in the first act? A duel! and both wounded—you butcher!

TRIPLET (*deprecatingly*). They are not to die, they shan't die, upon my honour!

WOFFINGTON. Do you think I'll trust their lives with you? I'll show you how to run people through the body (*takes pen, writes*). Business, "Araminta looks out of garret window, the combatants drop their swords, put their hands to their hearts, and stagger off, o.p. and p.s." Now, children! who helps me lay the cloth?

CHILDREN. I, and I! (*They run to dresser.*)

MRS. TRIPLET (*half rising*). Madam, I can't think of allowing you.

WOFFINGTON. Sit down, ma'am, or I must use brute force (*in MRS. TRIPLET'S ear*): shake hands with distress, for it shall never enter your door again.

[MRS. TRIPLET *clasps her hands*.
[WOFFINGTON *meets the Children with the tablecloth, which she lays*.] Twelve plates, quick! twenty-four knives, quicker! forty-eight forks, quickest.

Enter POMPEY, who sets pie on table, and exit, looking wistfully at it.

Mr. Triplet,—your coat, if you please,—and carve.

TRIPLET. My coat, madam!

WOFFINGTON. Yes; off with it, there's a hole in it. (TRIPLET, *with signs of astonishment, gives her his coat, then carves pie: they eat*. WOFFINGTON *seats herself*.) Be pleased to cast your eye on that, ma'am (Boy *passes housewife to MRS. TRIPLET*). Woffington's housewife, made by herself, homely to the eye, but holds everything in the world, and has a small space left for everything else; to be returned by the bearer. Thank you, sir! (*Stitches away very rapidly*.) Eat away, children; when once I begin the pie will soon end; (Girl *takes plate to her Mother*), I do everything so quick.

GIRL. The lady sews faster than you, mother.

WOFFINGTON. Bless the child, don't come near my sword-arm, the needle will go into your eye, and out at the back of your head (*Children laugh*). The needle will be lost, the child will be no more, enter undertaker, house turned topsyturvy, father shows Woffington the door, off she goes, with a face as long and as dull as papa's comedy, crying, "Fine Chaney o-ran-ges!"

[*The Children laugh heartily.*

GIRL. Mother! the lady is very funny!

WOFFINGTON. You'll be as funny when you're as well paid for it.

[TRIPLET *chokes with laughing, and lays down knife and fork.*

MRS. TRIPLET. James, take care!

WOFFINGTON. There's the man's coat, (*aside*) with a ten pound note in it. [Girl *takes it to TRIPLET*.

TRIPLET. My wife is a good woman, ma'am, but deficient in an important particular.

MRS. TRIPLET. Oh, James!

TRIPLET. Yes, my dear, I regret to say you have *no sense of humour*: no more than a cat, Jane.

WOFFINGTON. What! because the poor thing can't laugh at your comedy?

TRIPLET. No, ma'am, but she laughs at nothing.

WOFFINGTON. Try her with one of your tragedies!

MRS. TRIPLET. I am sure, James, if I don't laugh, it is not for the want of the will. (*Dolefully.*) I used to be a very hearty laugher; but I have n't laughed this two years (*WOFFINGTON leads MRS. TRIPLET to chair*).

WOFFINGTON. Oh, you have n't, have n't you? Then the next two years you shall do nothing else.

TRIPLET. Oh, madam, that passes the talent even of the great comedian.

BOY. *She* is not a comedy lady.

WOFFINGTON. Hallo!

BOY. You don't ever cry, pretty lady.

WOFFINGTON (*ironically*). Of course not.

BOY (*confidentially*). Comedy is crying. Father cries all the time he writes his comedy.

WOFFINGTON. Oh!

TRIPLET. Hold your tongue. They were tears of laughter, you know, ma'am. Wife, our children talk too much; they thrust their noses into everything, and criticise their own father.

WOFFINGTON. Unnatural offspring!

TRIPLET. And when they take up a notion, the devil himself could n't convince them to the contrary; for instance, all this morning they thought fit to assume that they were starving.

BOY. So we were till the angel came, and the devil went for the pie.

TRIPLET. There, there, there, there! now, you mark my words, Jane, we shall never get that idea out of their heads——

WOFFINGTON. Till we (*cuts a large piece of pie, and puts on Child's plate*) put a different idea into their stomachs. Come, *tringuons!* as they do in France. (*Fills glasses, and touches hers with those of the Children, who crowd round her with delight*). Were you ever in France, Triplet?

TRIPLET. No, madam, I am thoroughly original.

WOFFINGTON. That's true. Well, I went there once to learn tragedy of the great Dumesnil (*recites a couple of lines of tragedy à la Française*). But Peg Woffington was never meant to walk the stage on stilts;—no, let Mrs. Pritchard pledge Melpomene in her own poison-bowl, I'll give you Thalia in a bumper of Burgundy. Come, drink to your new mistress, Triplet. (*Fills her*

glass.) Mrs. Triplet (*she rises, bottle and glass in hand*), I must prescribe for you too. A wine-glassful of this elixir six times a day till further notice. Success to your husband's comedy! What's this? (*Sees fiddle in cradle.*) A fiddle, as I'm an ex-orange wench! (*Giving it to TRIPLET.*) Here, Triplet, a jig—a jig (*TRIPLET takes fiddle*). Peggy has not forgotten how to cover the buckle. Come, young ones—(*TRIPLET plays. She dances a jig with the Children*)—more power to your elbow, man—shake it, ye sowl! Hurroo! (*She dances up to TRIPLET, who, in his excitement, rises and joins in the jig, while MRS. TRIPLET follows their movements with her body.*) But come, Mr. Triplet, you really shan't make me play the fool any longer. Business!—my picture is to be finished. Mrs. Triplet, we must clear the studio:—take your cherubs into the bed-room.

MRS. TRIPLET (*seizes her hand*). Oh, madam! may the blessings of a mother watch over you in life and after it, and the blessings of these innocents too!

WOFFINGTON. Pooh! pooh! let me kiss the brats (*kisses them*). (*Aside*). Poor things!

BOY. I shall pray for you after father and mother.

GIRL. I shall pray for you after daily bread, because we were so hungry till you came.

WOFFINGTON (*putting them off*). There, there. Exeunt mother and cherubs. Music for the exit, Trippy—the merriest you can extort from that veteran Stradivarius of yours. (*Aside*). Heaven knows I've as much need of merry music as the saddest of them (*sees TRIPLET overcome*). Why, how now? If there is n't this kind-hearted, soft-headed, old booby of a Triplet making a picture of himself in water colours. (*Goes up to him—taps him on the arm*). Come! to work—to work, and with a will, for I have invited Cibber, and Quin, and Clive, and Snarl, Soaper and all, to see the portrait, which is to make your fortune and hand me down to posterity not half as handsome as nature made me. There (*sits*), I must put on my most bewitching smile of course. (*Aside*). Oh, dear! how it belies my poor aching heart.

[TRIPLET, during this, has got his palette and pencil, set his easel, and begun to work, while WOFFINGTON sits.]

Well, are you satisfied with it?

TRIPLET. Anything but, madam (*paints*).

WOFFINGTON. Cheerful soul! then I presume it is like.

TRIPLET. Not a bit. (*WOFFINGTON stretches.*) You must not yawn, ma'am—you must not yawn just now!

WOFFINGTON. Oh, yes, I must, if you will be so stupid.

TRIPLET. I was just about to catch the turn of the lip.

WOFFINGTON. Well, catch it, it won't run away.

TRIPLET. A pleasant half-hour it will be for me, when all your friends come here, like cits at a shilling ordinary, each for his cut. Head a little more that way. (*Sadly.*) I suppose you can't sit quiet, Madam; then never mind. Look on this picture and on that!

WOFFINGTON. Meaning, that I am painted as well as my picture.

TRIPLET. Oh, no, no, no! but to turn from your face, on which the lightning of expression plays continually, to this stony, detestable, dead daub: I could—(*seizes palette-knife*)—miserable mockery! vile caricature of life and beauty! take that! (*Dashes the knife through picture.*)

WOFFINGTON. Oh! right through my pet dimple! Hark! I hear the sound of coaches—the hour of critique approaches!

TRIPLET. Two coach loads of criticism, and the picture ruined!

WOFFINGTON (*reflecting*). I'll give you a lesson—your palette-knife (*cuts away face of the picture*).

TRIPLET. There will be Mr. Cibber with his sneering snuff-box; Mr. Quin with his humourous bludgeon; Mrs. Clive with her tongue; Mr. Snarl with his abuse; and Mr. Soaper with his praise!—but I deserve it all!

WOFFINGTON. That green baize—(*gets behind easel*)—fling it over the easel—so; and now (*shewing her face through the picture*) you shall criticise criticism, and learn the true weight of goose's feathers.

[TRIPLET throws the baize over the picture.

Enter CIBBER, CLIVE, QUIN, SNARL, and SOAPER. TRIPLET bows humbly. They return his salute carelessly.

CIBBER. Ough! Four pair of stairs!

QUIN. Well, where's the picture? (*Crossing with CLIVE.*) [*They take up positions to look at it.*

TRIPLET. Mrs. Woffington, gentlemen!

[TRIPLET removes the baize and suppresses a start.

SOAPER. Ah!

SNARL. Umph!

QUIN. Ho!

CLIVE. Eh?

CIBBER. Ah!

QUIN. Whose portrait did you say?

CLIVE. He, he! Peg Woffington's—it's a pretty head enough, and not a bit like Woffington.

QUIN. Nay—compare paint with paint, Kitty—who ever saw Woffington's real face?

SOAPER. Now, I call it beautiful; so smooth, polished, and uniform.

SNARL. Whereas nature delights in irregular and finely graduated surfaces. Your brush is not destitute of a certain crude talent, Mr. Triplet, but you are deficient in the great principles of Art; the first of which is a loyal adherence to truth; beauty itself is but one of the forms of truth, and nature is our finite exponent of infinite truth.

SOAPER. What wonderful criticism! One quite loses oneself among such grand words!

CIBBER. Yes, yes! proceed, Mr. Snarl. I am of your mind.

SNARL. Now in nature, a woman's face at this distance, has a softness of outline—(*draws back and makes a lorgnette of his two hands, the others do the same*), whereas your work is hard and tea-boardy.

SOAPER. Well, it is a *leetle tea-boardy*, perhaps. But the light and shade, Mr. Snarl—! the—what-d'ye-call—the—um—you know—eh?

SNARL. Ah! you mean the chiaroscuro.

SOAPER. Exactly!

SNARL. The chiaroscuro is all wrong. In nature, the nose, intercepting the light on one side the face, throws a shadow under the eye. Caravaggio, the Venetians, and the Bolognese, do particular justice to this—no such shape appears in your portrait.

CIBBER. 'Tis so—stap my vitals!
[*All express assent except SOAPER.*]

SOAPER. But, my dear Mr. Snarl, if there are no shades, there are lights—loads of lights.

SNARL. There are, only they are impossible (*superciliously*). You have, however, succeeded tolerably in the mechanical parts—the dress, for example; but your Woffington is not a woman, Sir—nor nature!

[*All shake their heads in assent.*]

WOFFINGTON. Woman! for she has tricked four men; nature! for a fluent dunce does not know her when he sees her!

CIBBER. Why—what the deuce?

CLIVE. Woffington!

QUIN. Pheugh!

WOFFINGTON (*steps out of picture*). A pretty face, and not like Woffington! I owe you two, Kitty Clive.

[MRS. CLIVE *bridles*.

(*To QUIN.*) Who ever saw Peggy's real face? Look at it now if you can without blushing.

ALL (*except SNARL*). Ha! ha!

SNARL. For all this, I maintain on the unalterable rules of art——

ALL. Ha! ha! ha!

SNARL (*fiercely*). Goths! (*QUIN and CIBBER turn up stage laughing*). Good morning, ladies and gentlemen!

CIBBER. Good morning, Mr. Snarl!

SNARL. I have a criticism to write of last night's performance. I shall sit on your pictures one day, Mr. Brush.

TRIPLET (*crosses to SNARL*). Pictures are not eggs, Sir—they are not meant to be sat upon.

SNARL. Come, Soaper! [*Exit.*

SOAPER. You shall always have my good word, Mr. Triplet.

TRIPLET. I will try and not deserve it, Mr. Soaper!

SOAPER. At your service, Mr. Snarl! [*Exit.*

CIBBER. Serve 'em right—a couple of serpents! or rather one boa-constrictor—Soaper slavers, for Snarl to crush (*crosses*). But we were all too hard on poor Trip: and if he will accept my apology——

TRIPLET. Thank you! “Colley Cibber's Apology” can be got at any book-stall.

CIBBER. Confound his impertinence! Come along, Jemmy!

QUIN. If ever you paint my portrait——

TRIPLET. The bear from Hockley Hole shall sit for the head.

QUIN. Curse his impudence! Have with you, Mr. Cibber. [*Exeunt CIBBER and QUIN.*

CLIVE. I did intend to have my face painted, sir, but after this——

TRIPLET. You will continue to do it yourself!

CLIVE. Brute! [*Exit in a rage.*

TRIPLET. Did I show a spirit, or did I not, ma'am?

WOFFINGTON. Tremendous!

TRIPLET. Did you mark the shot I fired into each as he sheered off?

WOFFINGTON. Terrific!

TRIPLET. I defy them! the coxcombs! as for real criticism, I invite it. Yours for instance, or that sweet lady's I met at Mr. Vane's, or anybody that appreciates

one's beauties. By-the-bye, you were not at Mr. Vane's yesterday?

WOFFINGTON. Yes, I was!

TRIPLET. No! I came with my verses, but she said you were not there.

WOFFINGTON. Who said so?

TRIPLET. The charming young lady who helped me with her own hand to nectar and ambrosia.

WOFFINGTON. A young lady?

TRIPLET. About twenty-two.

WOFFINGTON. In a travelling dress?

TRIPLET. Yes—brown hair—blue eyes! I poured out all to her;—that I expected to find you; that Mr. Vane admired you; and that you were sitting to me for your portrait; that I lived at 10, Hercules Buildings, and should be proud to show her the picture for her judgment.

WOFFINGTON. You told her all this?

TRIPLET. I did. Do you know her?

WOFFINGTON. Yes.

TRIPLET. Who is she?

WOFFINGTON. Mrs. Vane.

TRIPLET. Mrs. Vane! Mr. Vane's mother? No—no! that can't be!

WOFFINGTON. Mr. Vane's wife!

TRIPLET. Wife?

WOFFINGTON. Yes.

TRIPLET. Then she was n't to know you were there?

WOFFINGTON. No.

TRIPLET. Then I let the cat out of the bag?

WOFFINGTON. Yes.

TRIPLET. And played the devil with their married happiness?

WOFFINGTON. Probably. (*Turns her back on him.*)

TRIPLET. Just my luck! Oh! Lord, Lord! To see what these fine gentlemen are! to have a lawful wife at home, and then to come and fall in love with you! I do it for ever in my plays, it is all right there!—but in real life it is abominable!

WOFFINGTON. You forget, sir, that I am an actress!—a plaything for every profligate who can find the open sesame of the stage-door. Fool! to think there was an honest man in the world, and that he had shone on me!

TRIPLET. Mrs. Woffington!

WOFFINGTON. But what have we to do (*walks agitated*) with homes, and hearths, and firesides? Have we not the theatre, its triumphs, and full-handed thunders of

applause? Who looks for hearts beneath the masks we wear? These men applaud us, cajole us, swear to us, lie to us, and yet, forsooth, we would have them respect us too.

TRIPLET (*fiercely*). They shall respect you before James Triplet. A great genius like you, so high above them all!—my benefactress (*whimpers*).

WOFFINGTON (*taking his hand*). I thought this man truer than the rest. I did not feel his passion an insult. Oh! Triplet, I could have loved this man—really loved him!

TRIPLET. Then you don't love him?

WOFFINGTON. Love him! I hate him, and her, and all the world!

TRIPLET. You will break with him then?

WOFFINGTON. Break with him! No! I will feed his passion to the full—tempt him—torture him—play with him, as the angler plays the fish upon his hook! He shall rue the hour he trifled with a heart and brain like mine!

TRIPLET. But his poor wife?

WOFFINGTON. His wife! and are wives' hearts the only hearts that throb, and feel, and break? His wife must take care of herself, it is not from me that mercy can come to her.

TRIPLET. But, madam—(*a knock at door*). Who's this at such a moment (*he goes to the window*)! 'Tis a lady! Eh! cloaked and hooded. Who can she be? Perhaps a sitter! My new profession has transpired!

A tap at room-door. Enter a slatternly Servant, who hands a paper.

SERVANT. From a lady who waits below.

TRIPLET (*reads and drops the paper*). "Mabel Vane!"

WOFFINGTON. His wife here! (*To Servant*.) Shew the lady up stairs! [*Exit Servant.*]
What does she come here for?

TRIPLET. I don't know, and I wish to heaven she had stayed away! You will retire, of course you will retire?

WOFFINGTON. No, sir! I will know why she comes to you (*reflects, enters the picture again*). Keep it from me if you can!

[*TRIPLET sinks into a chair, the picture of consternation.*]

TRIPLET (*with a ghastly smile, going very slowly towards the door*). I am going to be in the company

of the two loveliest women in England; I would rather be between a lion and a unicorn—like the royal arms.

[*A tap at the door.*]

Enter MABEL VANE in hood and cloak, a mask in her hand.

TRIPLET. Madam!

MABEL (*crosses hastily*). See first that I am not followed; that man who pursued me from my husband's house,—look out.

TRIPLET (*looking through window*). Sir Charles Poman-der! he examines the house—his hand is on the knocker—no! he retires! (*He rids her of her hood, mantle, mask, &c.*)

MABEL. I breathe again (*hastily*). Mr. Triplet, you said I might command your services.

TRIPLET (*bows*).

MABEL. You know this actress you spoke of to-day, Mrs. Woffington?

TRIPLET (*aside*). Curse it! I am honoured by her acquaintance, madam!

MABEL. You will take me to her, to the theatre where she acts?

TRIPLET. But consider, madam!

MABEL. You must not refuse me.

TRIPLET. But what can be the use of it?

MABEL. I am sure you are true and honest—I will trust you (*TRIPLET bows*). When you saw me yesterday, I was the happiest woman in the world, for I love my husband; and I thought then he loved me as he used to do. Two days ago I left our country home—I yearned to be by my husband's side; I counted the hours of the journey, the miles, the yards of the road—I reached his house at last—to find that the heart, on which I had so longed to rest my head, was mine no longer.

TRIPLET. Poor thing! poor thing!

MABEL. And she who held my place, was the woman—the actress you so praised to me; and now you pity me, do you not; and will not refuse my request?

TRIPLET. But be advised;—do not think of seeking Mrs. Woffington; she has a good heart, but a fiery temper; besides, good heavens! you two ladies are rivals. Have you read the *Rival Queens*, Madam?

MABEL. I will cry to her for justice and mercy;—I never saw a kinder face than this lady's—she must be good and noble!

TRIPLET. She is! I know a family she saved from starvation and despair.

MABEL (*seeing WOFFINGTON in the picture*). Ah! she is there! see! see! (*She approaches the easel.*)

TRIPLET (*interposing*). Oh, my portrait! you must not go near that, the colours are wet!

MABEL. Oh, that she were here, as this wonderful portrait is; and then how I would plead to her for my husband's heart! (*She addresses the supposed picture.*) Oh, give him back to me! what is one more heart to you? you are so rich, and I am so poor, that without his love I have nothing; but must sit me down and cry till my heart breaks—give him back to me, beautiful, terrible, woman; for with all your gifts you cannot love him as his poor Mabel does. Oh, give him back to me—and I will love you and kiss your feet, and pray for you till my dying day. (*Kneels to her and sobs.*) Ah!—a tear! it is alive! (*Runs to TRIPLET and hides her head.*) I am frightened! I am frightened!

[WOFFINGTON steps out of frame and stands with one hand on her brow, in a half-despairing attitude. She waves her hand to TRIPLET to retire—MABEL stands trembling.]

WOFFINGTON. We would be alone.

TRIPLET (*in consternation*). But, Mrs. Woffington, but, ladies!

WOFFINGTON. Leave us!

TRIPLET. I will retire into my sleeping apartment (*retires into inner room, and puts out his head*), be composed, ladies. Neither of you could help it.

WOFFINGTON. Leave us, I say! (*He vanishes suddenly.*) [A long uneasy pause.]

WOFFINGTON (*with forced coldness*). At least, madam, do me the justice to believe I did not know Mr. Vane was married.

MABEL. I am sure of it—I feel you are as good as you are gifted.

WOFFINGTON. Mrs. Vane, I am not—you deceive yourself.

MABEL. Then, heaven have mercy on me! but you are—I see it in your face, ah! you know you pity me!

WOFFINGTON. I do, madam—and I could consent never more to see your—Mr. Vane.

MABEL. Ah, but will you give me back his heart? What will his presence be to me if his love remain behind?

WOFFINGTON. But, how, madam?

MABEL. The magnet can repel as well as attract—

you who can enchant—can you not break your own spell?

WOFFINGTON. You ask much of me!

MABEL. Alas, I do!

WOFFINGTON. But I could do even this.

MABEL. You could!

WOFFINGTON. And perhaps if you—who have not only touched my heart, but won my respect, say to me—“do so,” I shall do it. (MABEL clasps her hands.) There is only one way—but that way is simple. Mr. Vane thinks better of me than I deserve—I have only to make him (*with a trembling lip*) believe me worse than I am, and he will return to you, and love you better, far better, for having known, admired, and despised, Peg Woffington.

MABEL. Oh! I shall bless you every hour of my life. (*Pause.*) But rob you of your good name! bid a woman soil her forehead so for me! (*Sighs, long pause.*) With heaven’s help I do refuse your offer; it is better I should die with my heart crushed, but my conscience unstained; for so my humble life has passed till now.

WOFFINGTON. Humble! such as you are the diamonds of the world!!! Angel of truth and goodness, you have conquered! The poor heart we both overrate shall be yours again. In my hands ’t is painted glass at best—but set in the lustre of your love, it may become a priceless jewel. Can you trust me?

MABEL. With my life!

WOFFINGTON. And will you let me call you friend?

MABEL. Friend! no—not friend!

WOFFINGTON. Alas!

MABEL. Let me call you sister? I have no sister! (*Timidly and pleadingly.*)

WOFFINGTON. Sister! oh, yes! call me sister! (*They embrace.*) You do not know what it is to me, whom the proud ones of the world pass by with averted looks, to hear that sacred name from lips as pure as yours. Let me hold you in my arms—so—a little while—if you knew the good it does me to feel your heart beating close to mine—(*pause*); and now to bring back this truant—how this heart flutters—you must compose yourself (*goes to door leading to inner room and opens it*). And I have need to be alone awhile (*puts her in, comes forward and sits a moment with her hands pressed over her forehead*). ’T was a terrible wrench—but ’t is over; and now “about my brains” as Hamlet says—to bring back the husband to his duty—what a strange office for a woman

like me! How little the world knows about us after all (*she sighs and sobs convulsively*). I ought to feel very happy—pshaw! On with the mask and spangles, Peggy—and away with the fumes of this pleasant day-dream—how to bring Pomander hither? Let me see—this paper (*takes paper MABEL sent up*) signed in her hand; Mabel Vane—what if by its aid—I have it—pen—ink—one never can find writing materials in an author's room (*goes to door and calls*). Triplet!

Enter TRIPLET from inner room.

Pens and ink—quick!

TRIPLET (*gets them, looking at her*). Here, madam—and paper?

WOFFINGTON. No, I have that here (*she writes—he watches her*).

TRIPLET. Her eyes are red—and Mrs. Vane all of a flutter inside. There's been a storm—but they have n't torn each other in pieces, that's one comfort. But has she relented, I wonder?

WOFFINGTON. Triplet! This note to Sir Charles Pomander.

TRIPLET. Madam (*takes it*). What is it, I wonder? However, 't is not my business (*going—pauses*). But it is my business—I'm not a postman—if I carry letters I ought to know the contents (*returns*). Madam——

WOFFINGTON. Well!

TRIPLET. Madam—I—I——

WOFFINGTON. I see—you wish to know the contents of that letter—hear them: “Follow the bearer.”

TRIPLET. Madam!

WOFFINGTON (*reads*). I am here without my husband's knowledge.

TRIPLET. Mrs. Woffington!

WOFFINGTON (*reads*). Alone and unprotected—signed “Mabel Vane.”

TRIPLET. Her own signature too! Mrs. Woffington—you are a great actress—you have been cruelly wronged—you have saved me from despair, and my children from starvation; but before I will carry that letter, I will have my hands hacked off at the wrists.

WOFFINGTON (*aside*). What a good creature this is. Then you refuse to obey my orders.

TRIPLET. No! no! ask me to jump out of that window—to burn my favourite tragedy—to forswear pen and ink for ever—anything but carry that letter, and I will do it.

WOFFINGTON. Well—leave the letter! (TRIPLET *runs for his hat.*) Where are you going?

TRIPLET. To bring the husband to his wife's feet—and so to save one angel—that's the lady in the other room—from despair; and another angel—that's you, from a great crime. Trust poor Jemmy Triplet for once to bring this domestic drama to a happy denouement!

[*Exit.*

WOFFINGTON. How innocently he helps my plot! I must have all the puppets under my hand. If I know Sir Charles, he is still on the watch (*goes to window*). Yes! (*Goes to inner door.*) Here—your eldest boy, Mrs. Triplet; I want him. (*Enter LYSIMACHUS.*)

Lysimachus, you see that gentleman, run down—give him this letter—and then show him up here.

[*Exit LYSIMACHUS.*

And now Mrs. Vane's mantle, the hood well forward—so—we are nearly of a height—he does not know I am here—if I can but imitate her voice and rustic shyness—allons, Peggy, 't is seldom you acted in so good a cause. (*She assumes the air of MRS. VANE.*)

Enter POMANDER behind—WOFFINGTON appears sunk in grief—he comes forward—she starts and gives a little shriek.

POMANDER. My dear Mrs. Vane (*she shrinks*). Do not be alarmed—loveliness neglected, and simplicity deceived, give irresistible claims to respect as well as adoration. Had fate given me this hand (*he takes her hand*)—

WOFFINGTON. Oh, please, sir!

POMANDER. Would I have abandoned it for that of a Woffington—as artificial and hollow a jade as ever winked at a side-box. Oh, had I been your husband, madam—how would I have revelled in the pastoral pleasures you so sweetly recalled yesterday—the Barbary mare—

WOFFINGTON (*timidly*). Hen!

POMANDER. Ah, yes, the Barbary hen; and old dame—dame—

WOFFINGTON. Best, please sir!

POMANDER. Yes, Best—that happy though elderly female for whom you have condescended to make puddings.

WOFFINGTON. Alas, sir!

POMANDER. You sigh! It is not yet too late to convert me. Upon this white hand I swear to become your

pupil, as I am your adorer (*he kisses it*); let me thus fetter it with a worthy manacle. (*Aside*). What will innocence say to my five hundred guinea diamond?

WOFFINGTON. La, sir! how pretty!

POMANDER. Let me show how poor its lustre is to that of your eyes. (*He tries to draw back her hood.*)

WOFFINGTON. Oh, sir—hark! (*She suddenly starts away and listens in an attitude of alarm.*)

POMANDER. Ah! (*noise without*). Footsteps on the stairs! (*Goes to door and opens it, listening.*)

VANE (*without*). Another flight!

POMANDER. Ha! Vane's voice, by all that's mal-à-propos; (*WOFFINGTON screams and rushes into inner apartment*) and now for Monsieur le mari.

[TRIPLET appears at the door leading to the staircase, with his back to the stage and speaking off.

TRIPLET. Have a care, sir! There is a hiatus in the fourth step—and now for the friend who waits to forget grief and suspicion in your arms—that friend is——

Enter VANE—TRIPLET turns round and recognises POMANDER.

The Devil!

POMANDER. You flatter me!

VANE. So this is the mysterious rencontre—pray, Sir Charles, what is it you want to forget in my arms?

POMANDER. In your arms! (*Aside.*) Confounds himself with his wife. Perhaps you had better explain, my friend?

TRIPLET. Nay, sir—be yours the pleasing duty!

VANE. In one word, Sir Charles Pomander, why are you here? and for what purpose am I sent for?

POMANDER. In two words, my dear fellow, I don't choose to tell you why I am here—and 't was not I who sent for you.

VANE (*to TRIPLET*). Speak, sirrah—your riddling message!

TRIPLET. There's nothing for it but the truth. Then, sir—the friend I expected you would find here was Mrs.——

POMANDER (*to TRIPLET*). Stop, my deplorable-looking friend: (*to VANE*) when the answer to such a question begins with a mistress, I think you had better not enquire further: (*to TRIPLET*). Don't complete the name.

VANE. I command you to complete it, or——

TRIPLET. Gentlemen, gentlemen, how am I to satisfy both of you?

POMANDER. My dear Vane, remember it is a lady's secret—the only thing in the world one is bound to keep, except one's temper, which, by-the-bye, you're losing rapidly.

VANE (*aside*). He spoke of griefs and suspicions to be forgiven and forgotten. Mabel has left my house. (*Crosses.*) Sir Charles Pomander, I insist on knowing who this lady is. If it is as I fear, I have the best right to ask.

POMANDER. But the worst right to be answered.

VANE. How am I to construe this tone, sir?

POMANDER. Do as we did at school with a troublesome passage—don't construe it at all.

VANE. Sir Charles Pomander, you are impertinent.

POMANDER. My dear Vane, you are in a passion.

VANE. By heaven, sir—

TRIPLET. Gentlemen, gentlemen, I give you my word, Mr. Vane, she does not know of Sir Charles Pomander's presence here.

VANE. She? 's death, who?

TRIPLET. Mrs. Vane!

VANE. My wife—here—and with him?

TRIPLET. No—not with *him*!

POMANDER. I regret to contradict you, my dilapidated friend, or to hurt you, my dear Vane; but really, in self-defence—you know this signature (*offers paper written by WOFFINGTON*).

VANE. Mabel's hand!

POMANDER. Yes—what my attentions began, your little peccadilloes finished—cause and effect, my dear fellow,—pure cause and effect.

VANE. Coxcomb and slanderer! draw and defend yourself. [*Draws.*

POMANDER. If you will have it! [*Draws.*

TRIPLET (*throwing himself between them*). Hold! hold!

[WOFFINGTON suddenly opens the inner room door, and presents herself at the threshold: her hood is drawn over her face.]

TRIPLET. Mrs. Vane!

VANE. Mabel! wife! say that this is not true—that you were lured by stratagem. Oh, speak! belie this cox-

comb! You know how bitterly I repented the infatuation that brought me to the feet of another.

[WOFFINGTON *bursts into a laugh, and throws back the hood.*

POMANDER. Woffington!

VANE. She here!

WOFFINGTON. There, Sir Charles, did I not wager he would confess he was heartily ashamed of himself? (*Crosses.*)

TRIPLET (*aside*). I have a glimmer of comprehension.

WOFFINGTON. Yes—we have had our laugh—and Mr. Vane his lesson; as for Mrs. Vane—this way, madam, and satisfy yourself. [MABEL *appears.*

MABEL. Ernest—dear Ernest!

VANE (*sternly*). Mabel, how came you here?

WOFFINGTON. In such very questionable company as a town rake and a profane stage-player? Mrs. Vane might have asked the same question yesterday. Why Mrs. Vane somehow fancied you had mislaid your heart in Covent Garden green-room, and that I had feloniously appropriated it: she came here in search of stolen goods—would you could rummage here, madam, and satisfy yourself if you still want proof, that I have no such thing as a heart about me—not even one of my own.

TRIPLET. I deny that—a better heart than Mrs. Woffington's—

WOFFINGTON. What on earth do you know about it, man?

VANE (*to MABEL*). But this letter?

WOFFINGTON. Was written by me on a paper which by accident bore Mrs. Vane's signature. The fact is, I had a wager with Sir Charles here—his diamond ring against my left-hand glove—that I could bewitch a certain country gentleman's imagination, though his heart all the while belonged to its rightful owner, and I have won (*sighs*).

VANE. What a dupe I have been—am I enough humiliated?

POMANDER. Ha! ha! ha! My poor fellow, you had better return to Huntingdonshire, and leave town and the players to us, who know how to deal with them.

WOFFINGTON. And are quite safe against being taken in—eh! Sir Charles? (*Points to ring on her finger.*)

POMANDER. Oh, perfectly—we know each other's cards—retain that ring as a mark of my— (WOFFINGTON *holds up her finger.*)

POMANDER. Respect!

WOFFINGTON. No, no—I accept your ring; but I shall always hate you.

POMANDER. I welcome the sentiment—I can endure anything but your indifference.

VANE. And you, Mabel, will you forgive my infatuation?

MABEL. I forgive all, Ernest—(*crosses to WOFFINGTON, aside to her*) what do we not owe you, sister?

WOFFINGTON. Nothing that word does not pay for. (*Aside.*) Alas! and so ends the game. You and I have the tricks, I think, Sir Charles—Mrs. Vane the honours.—Mr. Vane will quit hazard and the clubs for Willoughby Manor and the double dummy of a matrimonial rubber. As for me, I revoke my lead of hearts.

POMANDER. After taking my ace of diamonds!

TRIPLET. And poor Jemmy Triplet I suppose must once again take up his solitary hand at patience.

WOFFINGTON. Unless Manager Rich is fool enough to accept my judgment for gospel—and then—but whom have we here?

Enter CIBBER, QUIN, MRS. CLIVE, SNARL, and SOAPER; SNARL and SOAPER cross behind.

CIBBER. Ah! Mrs. Vane—Mr. Vane—Sir Charles—Peggy—Bonjour, Mesdames et Messieurs—Mr. Triplet, I congratulate you—stap my vitals!

TRIPLET. Congratulate me!

CLIVE. Yes—Quin here, who's a good natured bear, declares we behaved shamefully to you to-day, and so as Mr. Rich has just told us of your good fortune——

TRIPLET. My good fortune! there must be some mistake. You've come to the wrong house.

QUIN. No; you have a prospect henceforward of dining every day of your life. 'Tis a great comfort, and I wish you appetite to enjoy it, Mr. Triplet.

TRIPLET. Am I awake? Pinch me, somebody—(*WOFFINGTON pinches him*) thank you—I *am* awake.

CIBBER. Manager Rich, thanks to Peggy's influence here, and a good word or two from one who shall be nameless, has accepted one of your tragedies.

TRIPLET. Oh, Lord!

SOAPER. He! he! I give you joy, Mr. Triplet; Mr. Snarl and I are so glad, for as Mr. Snarl said to me, as we left your studio this morning, "I do so wish they'd play one of Mr. Triplet's tragedies."

SNARL. That I might have the pleasure of criticising it. Mr. Rich did me the honour to ask which of the

three we should accept—I told him, the shortest.

CLIVE. You'll be pleased to hear, Mrs. Woffington, there's a capital part for *me*. (*Aside.*) Now she could knock me down, I know.

TRIPLET. One of my tragedies accepted at last! Oh, gracious goodness! Break it gently to my wife—I know I'm dreaming, but prithee don't anybody wake me. Oh, Mrs. Woffington—my guardian angel—my preserver! (*Seizes her hand.*)

WOFFINGTON. No, no—we had better wait, and see on which act of your tragedy the curtain falls.

TRIPLET. Ah! I forgot that.

MABEL. I need not wait to express my gratitude—say in what way can I ever thank you?

WOFFINGTON. Dear sister, when hereafter in your home of peace you hear harsh sentence passed on us, whose lot is admiration, but rarely love, triumph but never tranquillity—think sometimes of poor Peg Woffington, and say, stage masks may cover honest faces, and hearts beat true beneath a tinselled robe—

Nor ours the sole gay masks that hide a face
Where care and tears have left their withering trace,
On the world's stage, as in our mimic art,
We oft confound the actor with the part.

POMANDER. Distrust appearances—an obvious moral—
With which, however, I've no time to quarrel;
Though for my part, I've found, the winning riders
In the world's race are often the outsiders.

VANE. So I have played at love—witched from my
will.

MABEL. My love was always Ernest, and is still.

CIBBER. Pshaw! stap my vitals! "Manners make the
man,"

They have made *me*!

SNARL. 'T is about all they can!

SOAPER. Yes; Mr. Cibber's epitaph shall be,
He played Lord Foppington at seventy-three.

CLIVE. I'm for plain speaking—let the truth be
shown—

SNARL. Truth's in a well—best leave that well alone—

QUIN. Its bitter waters why should *you* uncork?
No; play like me—an honest knife and fork.

TRIPLET. That part would be well played by many a
poet,
Had he the practice one must have, to know it,

But 't is the verdict by the public past,
Must sentence scribblers or to feast or fast.

Be kind to-night: in triplet tone I sue,
As actor, manager, and author too.

POMANDER. Mind that for sentence when they call
the cause on,

You've at least one Peg here—to hang applause on.

WOFFINGTON. Yes; sure those kind eyes and bright
smiles one traces,

Are not deceptive *masks*—but honest *faces*.

I'd swear it—but if your hands make it certain,

Then all is right on both sides of the curtain.

THE END.



But 't is the verdict by the public past,
Must sentence scribblers or to feast or fast.
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